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A YOUNG MAN'S RELIGION

BY THE

REV. GEORGE JACKSON, B.A.

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27 PATERNOSTER ROW

MCM

"*The call to be religious is not stronger than the call to see of what sort our religion is.*"—DEAN CHURCH.

TO THE

REV. ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF MANY KINDNESSES

WHICH CAN NEITHER BE REPAID NOR FORGOTTEN

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE ESTEEM OF

THE AUTHOR AND HIS PEOPLE

Edinburgh.

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THE LOVE WE FEEL AND THE LOVE WE TRUST

"*Forsyth said a good thing the other day—he thought that 'the time had come to get back the word* Grace *into our preaching'; word and thing have too much disappeared.*"

EXTRACT FROM LETTER BY DR. DALE.

"'*Grace'—what is that? The word means first—love in exercise to those who are below the lover, or who deserve something else, stooping love that condescends, and patient love that forgives.*"

ALEXANDER MACLAREN.

"*Let me no more my comfort draw*
From my frail hold of Thee,
In this alone rejoice with awe
Thy mighty grasp of me."

J. C. SHAIRP.

I

THE LOVE WE FEEL AND THE LOVE WE TRUST

"*HEREIN is love,*" says the Apostle John, "*not that we loved God, but that He loved us.*" "Not that we loved God"—that is the love we feel, our love; "but that He loved us"—that is the love we trust, His love. And we are saved, not by the love we feel, but by the love we trust. That distinction and some of the truths that are involved in it are the subject of this chapter.

I

And the distinction is greater and of greater importance than may at first sight appear to us. Let me try, by one or two simple questions, to set it in a clearer light. What is the starting-point in religion, the centre around which all else must revolve—God or man? What is religion—a discovery or a revelation, a human achievement or a Divine bestowment? What is that

wherein our salvation stands—is it in what we are to God, or in what He is to us? Is it we who have chosen Him, or is it He who has chosen us? What is it that saves—the love we feel, or the love we trust?

The distinction, I hope, grows clear to us; for it is both very real and of the first importance. Christianity, according to some, is (if I may borrow a phrase of Mr. John Morley's) our "last great religious synthesis"; that is to say, it is the last and most successful attempt at piecing together the scattered thoughts of men concerning themselves and their relation to the great Unseen. The Christian doctrine of God, *e.g.*—on this explanation of Christianity—is the magnificent discovery of that sublime spiritual genius, Jesus of Nazareth, the Columbus of the spiritual world, who has by searching found out God. In that same Jesus, too, meet all our highest ideals of duty and of conduct. Morality has come forth from His hands a new creation; and now, as He was upon the earth, so are we to be: strong as He was strong, tender as He was tender, holy in all manner of life even as He was holy. There is the far-shining goal towards which we are to make our way. Day by day we are to gird up the loins of our soul, until at last the long ascent is made, and we stand with Him on those same victorious heights, crowned with glory and with honour.

This, I say, is one not uncommon conception

of the essential meaning of the Christian message. And, obviously, there are in it large elements of truth. Here and there it might be expounded and defended in the language of Scripture itself. Nevertheless, speaking broadly, such a conception of religion is clean contrary to the scriptural idea. It is a revival of the blunder of the old astronomy which made the earth to be the centre of all things. For, throughout, the emphasis is on man—man's thoughts, man's duties; man is to find out the best that he can, and then be true to it as far as he can. But this is, emphatically, not the Biblical conception of religion; nay, indeed, it is separated from it by a whole diameter. The Bible is not the history of a patient search and a partial discovery; it is the record of a revelation. It makes known to us, not the thoughts of man concerning God, but the word of God concerning Himself. And, therefore, the first call of the Gospel is not to bid us gather anew the scattered energies of the soul, and "do our best"; rather is it to bid us humble ourselves and receive God's best. It is impossible to fling upwards from below the chain by which man shall climb from earth to heaven; "it must be let down upon us, link by link, from on high; the Father must come forth to meet His child, Christ must become man, the Holy Spirit must be given, the New Jerusalem must descend from God out of heaven, every good and perfect gift must be received from above." It is not in our strivings,

nor our love, nor our faith, nor in anything that is ours, but in God, that we must find the starting-point of all true religion. "Salvation is of the Lord"; it is from without, not from within. We are saved, not by the love we feel, but by the love we trust.

II

To this truth all Scripture bears its witness. In his Gospel John speaks of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He might have written "the disciple who loved Jesus"; the words would have been true. But that which brought strength and gladness into John's life was not that his love, poor and feeble at its best, went out to Christ, but that Christ's love, in all its wealth and fulness, poured itself out upon him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." "We love," he says; why? "Because He first loved us." The river flows at his feet, and everything liveth whithersoever it cometh, but John does not forget that it has its source in the everlasting hills of God.

"Now that ye have come to know God," Paul writes to the Galatians, "or, rather," he adds, checking and correcting himself, "to be known of God." The self-correction is full of significance; it reveals the habitual drift of the Apostle's thought. "Paul remembers that the change has its ultimate source, not in the mind of man, as though by his intelligence he had found out God,

but in the mind of God, who in mercy has looked upon man."

A still more decisive passage is the same Apostle's well-known declaration to the Corinthians: "I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you . . . for I delivered unto you first of all"—what? "that ye should seek God and imitate Jesus? that ye should believe in the Beatitudes, and live according to them"? Nay, not so is it written: "I delivered unto you first of all how that Christ died for our sins." The whole paragraph is concerned, not with the duty of man, but with the doings of God. Human duty has its place in the Divine message, but that place is not the first place. The Gospel, as Paul understood it, it cannot be too often affirmed, was not good advice, but good news; it made known primarily, not something to do, but something done; and before the Apostle will call upon one man to love and to work for God, he bids the whole world behold the Divine love, toiling, suffering, triumphing for it.

Nor is this a conception of the Gospel peculiarly "Pauline." The section of Paul's Epistle from which I have just quoted closes with these words: "Whether then it be I or they"—Paul, Peter, Apollos, it matters not which one of us you take, our witness is the same—"so we preach, and so ye believed." Turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and mark how the first preachers of the Gospel

interpreted the great commission which their risen Lord had given them. They did not expound the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, they had little to say concerning the example of Jesus; with one voice they made known that great power of God whose supreme manifestation was the Death and the Resurrection of Christ, whereof they were witnesses. What God had wrought for man—this was their Gospel; what man must do for God—that would come afterwards and in due course. "Nothing," says Mr. R. H. Hutton, "can be plainer than that the Gospel, as it was originally preached, was a message which put new power and life into man, by enabling him to believe in a new power and life outside him." And there is no "Gospel" that can ever be the power of God unto salvation which does not proclaim with the Apostle, "first of all," how that Christ died for our sins.

"Salvation is of the Lord": witnesses to the truth multiply on every hand. Take, *e.g.* our two great Christian Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Wherein do these differ from all other religious observances and forms of worship of which, from time to time, the Christian Church may make use? Is it not in this, that, while these things are the expression of our faith in God, of our love for Him, the Sacraments, on the other hand, are (as Dr. Dale has said) the expression of Divine thoughts, the visible symbols of Divine acts? When in Baptism we receive a

little child, that which we declare is not the faith or feeling of the parents, but the grace and authority of Christ. When at the Lord's Table we "eat this bread and drink this cup," we "do show the Lord's death"; we proclaim, not our love, but His, not the love we feel, but the love we trust.

Or, consider the great festivals of the Christian year: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Whitsuntide—what is their true significance? When Christmas comes, and all men's hearts are glad, and the Christmas bells, as they "answer each other in the mist," seem to say,

> "Peace and good-will, good-will and peace,
> Peace and good-will to all mankind,"

it is easy to suppose that this is the season's first and deepest lesson to us. Yet we have only to think again for one moment to realize how far beyond this is the message of these great days of the Christian year. For do they not all call to mind and proclaim, "first of all," not duties of man, but doings of God?—how that for us men and for our salvation Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and hath sent forth His Holy Spirit to lead men into all truth, and to create them anew in His own likeness and image.

In the light of facts like these, it seems very strange to find Matthew Arnold urging against certain forms of Evangelical belief the very emphasis with which they have proclaimed the truth which I am endeavouring to make plain. Of Calvinistic Puritanism he complains: "The passiveness of man, the activity of God, are the great features of this scheme; there is very little of what man does, very much of what God does." Arminian Methodism he thinks equally at fault, because it also gives "first and almost sole place to what God does, with disregard to what man does." But, as Dr. Dale has pointed out, Matthew Arnold's real quarrel was neither with Calvinistic Puritanism nor Arminian Methodism, but with St. Paul and the New Testament. And this that he urges against our faith, rightly understood,—I say rightly understood, for it has often been grievously perverted and misunderstood,—is its crowning glory, that which has made it to ten thousand times ten thousand glad tidings of great joy. This is the fact that lends distinction to the Christian Gospel, and gives it its place apart among all the other great world-religions: *they* insist on what man must do in order to win God; *it* proclaims what God has already done in order to win man.

Students of the science of Comparative Religion sometimes draw up for us a kind of table of parallel columns. In the first column they enter certain of the recorded sayings of Jesus, and then, in the

succeeding columns, these are paired off with a saying of Confucius, or Buddha, or some other great teacher of antiquity. And sometimes, when Christian men and women see these parallel columns, their hearts begin to fail them for fear; they wonder if, after all, there is anything so special and distinctive about their faith as they had imagined, and if the day may not sometime come when He whom they have called "Lord and Master" will not have to take His place among the world's greatest and best—at their head, but still one of them. Yet, surely, we do not need to fear. There is an entry in that first column which Peter made long centuries ago: "His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree." Now, run your eye along the parallel columns. See! they are all blank, every one of them! This is my Lord's glory, which no man can take from Him, and no man can share with Him. Others can tell me of a love which I owe, of the devotion, and gifts, and service which I must bring and lay at the feet of my Deity; He alone reveals to me a love which I can trust.

III

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." What then shall we do? What but this that Jude bids us, "Keep yourselves in the love of God"? God's love is all about us, like His sunshine; it is for us to keep

ourselves in it, to live and to rejoice in it. We have not to create it, nor to call it forth; it has not to be won by earnest importunity, nor to be merited by high and strenuous endeavour; it is there, always there, his who will receive it; we have but to keep ourselves in it, and it will wrap all our days in its glad, bright radiance.

When shall we learn, in our religious life, to keep the Divine order? Christ's first word to us is never "Child of Mine, lovest thou Me?" but always, "Child of Mine, behold My love to thee." And our first duty is not to tease, and vex, and worry ourselves with questions about our love to Him, whether we love Him or not, whether our love is of the right kind or not, but to set ourselves in the full blaze of His love, that, like as the flowers answer to the call of the sunshine, so our love may spring up in glad response to His. Let the lives of the saints teach us. "Shall we seek," writes Cromwell in one of his letters, "for the root of our comforts within us? What God hath done, what He is to us in Christ, is the root of our comfort: in this is stability; in us is weakness." "I think," he murmured, as he lay on his deathbed, "I think I am the poorest wretch that lives; but I love God; or, rather"—like St. Paul, checking and correcting himself—"am beloved of God."

There was published in this country a few years ago the life-story of a German lady, the Countess Adelina Schimmelmann. It is a book

of singular interest, and nothing in it is so interesting as the story of the writer's conversion. After weeks of darkness and uncertainty, she seemed, she says, to hear God saying to her: "My child, thy salvation does not depend upon thy love to Me, but upon My love to thee, just as thou art." "Then," she says, "broke in upon my heart a sun of joy, in the beams of which I still rejoice, and whose light will shine upon me eternally. Now my cold heart began to burn, not on account of my love to Christ, but because of His love to me." Was not Horatius Bonar right?—

> "Not what these hands have done
> Can save this guilty soul;
> Not what this toiling flesh has borne
> Can make my spirit whole.
>
> "Thy love to me, O God,
> Not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
> Can rid me of this dark unrest,
> And set my spirit free."

"It is not in our own wounds, but in the wounds of Jesus that we must put our hands." The love we feel—who dare build on that? Alas! it is shifting as the shifting sand, changing with the changing years. One day its flame is clear and steadfast, another it is dim and flickering. But the love we trust—thank God, that abideth ever, and knows no change. It is a lamp whose light is never low, a rock no tumults can ever shake. He that buildeth there shall never be confounded.

"Herein is love;" and it is yours—oh, if along the thin wire of my poor words the Divine message could flash into some heart!—it is yours who doubt it most. You have read "Ian Maclaren's" touching story, "The Transformation of Lachlan Campbell." You remember how Lachlan's daughter, Flora, having no mother to guide her, went astray, and wandered into the far country. Then one day, in the little kirk-session, Lachlan rose and himself moved that Flora's name be struck off from the roll. But one who herself had learned many things in the school of suffering, Marget Howe, went to find out Lachlan in his darkened home. And when she came to the cottage, she found Flora's plants laid out in the sun, and her father watering them on his knees, and one that was ready to die he had sheltered with his plaid from the wind. Then Lachlan took her into the cottage, and showed her what he had done, how with his own hand he had crossed out Flora's name from the family Bible. But Marget could see that the hand that held the pen had wavered, and the ink had run as if it had been mingled with tears. Then a letter was written bidding Flora come back, for her father loved her, and mourned for her, and would not be comforted. And that very night Lachlan took some of his stern Puritan books, and made of them a stand near the window, and set the lamp upon it, and every night its light fell upon the steep path that

climbed to Flora's home. And one day she came, and again the old Bible was brought out, while Lachlan, with bowed head, told her what he had done. "Give me the pen," said Flora; and when Lachlan lifted his head this was what he read :—

Flora Campbell,
Missed April, 1873.
Found September, 1873.
"Her father fell on her neck and kissed her."

Yes; but the love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind. No father ever missed and waited for his child as God misses and waits for us. He, too, has His book, where all His children's names are written; and the prodigal's is there with the rest. And whensoever he will come home again, under his name the Father will write, "This My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Who would not trust a love like this? And this is the love which in the Gospel is proclaimed unto us.

"OLD NEWS, AND GOOD NEWS,
AND NEW NEWS"

C

"*In the cross of Christ, excess in man is met by excess in God; excess of evil is mastered by excess of love.*"—BOURDALOUE.

"*THE PITMAN TO HIS WIFE*"

"*I've got a word like a sword in my heart, that has pierced it through and through.*

When a message comes to a man from Heaven he needn't ask if it's true;

There's none on earth could frame such a tale, for as strange as the tale may be,

Jesus, my Saviour, that Thou should'st die for love of a man like me!

* * * * * *

It was for me that Jesus died! for me, and a world of men

Just as sinful and just as slow to give back His love again;

He didn't wait till I came to Him, but He loved me at my worst;

He needn't ever have died for me if I could have loved Him first."—DORA GREENWELL.

II

"OLD NEWS, AND GOOD NEWS, AND NEW NEWS"

IN one of Tennyson's letters, written from a little village on the Lincolnshire coast, there is a delightful scrap of autobiography. The poet was housed, he tells us, with "two perfectly honest Methodists." When he arrived he asked his hostess after news. "Why, Mr. Tennyson," said she, "there's only one piece of news that I know, that Christ died for all men." "Well," answered Tennyson, "and that is old news, and good news, and new news." It is of this news, old yet new, and always good, that I want to speak now. Three great words of Scripture shall tell us what the news is—

"*Christ died for our sins.*"—1 COR. xv. 3.

". . . *And not for ours only, but also for the whole world.*"—1 JOHN ii. 2.

"*The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.*"—GAL. ii. 20.

I

"*Christ died for our sins.*" This is the primary, regal truth of the Christian revelation; and the simplest, most obvious statement of the fact is also the truest. Christ died that we might be forgiven; He died that the consequences of our sins might not be visited upon us.

Christ did not die in order to induce God to love us. It was, as the Scriptures everywhere assert, because God loved us that Christ died. His love was not the consequence, but the origin of Christ's death. Yet Christ did not die simply that He might reveal the love of God, and that so, by the revelation of Divine love, He might win us from our sins. The death of Christ *was* a revelation, wonderful and pathetic, of the love of God; but this was not, in the Apostle's thought at least, its immediate object. If St. Paul had meant that, he could have said it; but he did not say it; what he said was: "Christ died for our *sins*." To use Dr. Dale's distinction, it is the revelation that comes through the redemption rather than the redemption through the revelation.

There is in the little Swiss town of Stanz a lovely sculptured group, which tells in white marble the story of the brave Arnold von Winkelried. When, in one of their conflicts with the Austrians, the Swiss soldiers strove in vain to break through the terrible Austrian phalanx, Winkelried, it is said, rushed on to the foe, and laying hold of as

many spears as his arms could reach bore them to the ground with the whole weight of his body. Then through the gap in the ranks, and over his dead body, his comrades pressed to victory. And on Calvary—it is no idle figure that I use—Christ gathered our sins like a sheaf of spears into His own heart; they killed Him, but His death saved us. "He was wounded for our transgressions"; "His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree"; "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." It is a mystery that no wisdom can fathom and no words can tell; but "as a leaf is threaded through and through with its fibres," so is the New Testament threaded with this truth. It was the sin of man that made necessary the death of Christ, and it is the death of Christ that now makes possible the forgiveness of man.

I am aware that even so simple a statement of the fact as this is sufficient to raise serious questionings in the minds of many. But to discuss, even to name, the objections which have from time to time been urged against the Atonement is not now possible, and I must be content with offering one or two general suggestions.

And it is specially worthy of note that very many of the objections to which I refer are really objections against theories, explanations of the Atonement, rather than against the Atonement itself. This is not to say that our theories are foolish and superfluous; indeed, they are inevitable

—we are driven to them by a kind of intellectual necessity. Men who think are compelled to seek some expression, however inadequate, of the contents of their religious faith, which is only another way of saying they must have a theology. Nevertheless, the New Testament itself, clear and emphatic as it is in its proclamation of the great fact, has little to offer by way of explanation of the fact; so that, so long as we confine ourselves to its words, many of the current objections never come into view at all. Surely, therefore, it ought to be possible for us, however intolerable or unthinkable this or that suggested explanation may be, to hold fast to the fact itself.

Several years ago astronomers were greatly perplexed by an apparent irregularity in the planet Uranus. The effects of all known attractions upon the planet were carefully calculated, and its place in the heavens thus predicted. But through the operation of some unknown cause the event always falsified the prediction, for the planet was sometimes before, sometimes behind its expected place. Ultimately the disturbing influence was discovered in the existence of the planet Neptune and the mystery was solved. Now, without doubt, during the time that preceded the discovery of the true cause, multitudes of explanations were forthcoming; and we can imagine an astronomer of that day testing each one in its turn, finding them all wanting, and yet still refusing to doubt for a moment the results of his own observations in the

disturbance of the planet's motion; sceptical of the theories, he would still hold to the facts. Is no such attitude possible for us in regard to the Atonement? May we not accept the forgiveness offered to us through the death of Christ, absolutely distrustful though we are of every explanation of the mysterious Divine processes that have made the offer possible?

But, it may be asked—for the question will make itself heard—if God loved us, why could He not forgive us without Christ's death? And how has Christ's death operated so as to make possible what before was impossible? These are questions to which probably a final answer can never be given; it may be doubted whether the New Testament itself provides us with the materials necessary for an answer. But, let us remember, our ignorance is no fit judge of the ways of God. If apart from the death of Christ our forgiveness had been possible, then had not Christ died. But since Christ has died, therefore we judge that necessity—incomprehensible as it may be to us—was laid upon Him.

> "And was there, then, no other way
> For God to take? I cannot say;
> I only bless Him day by day
> Who saved me through my Saviour."

Or, as Faber puts it:

> "I cannot understand the woe,
> Which Thou wast pleased to bear
> O Lamb of God! I only know
> That all my hopes are there."

Therefore, I repeat, let no difficulties concerning the mediation of Christ cheat us of the forgiveness which He has won for us. God is satisfied, forgiveness is proclaimed ; in comparison with that all else is but secondary. What should we think of a man who refused to enter upon his inheritance because the title-deed, which did beyond question make it his, was yet so worded that he in his ignorance was unable to understand it? And when to us sinners there is offered in the Gospel the forgiveness of our sins through the death of Christ ; when, moreover, sixty generations of saints affirm with one voice that what God promises He does in reality bestow, shall we suffer this great inheritance of grace to pass from us because we cannot comprehend all that is written in the charter that secures it to us? It is not mine to interpret the deed ; it bears the sign manual of the Cross ; God Himself declares it valid. I want no more ; my title is clear. Let faith hasten to make her great claim, and God by Himself hath sworn that it shall be established.

II

Christ died for our sins, "and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."—And now it is I who am in a difficulty. Every one understands what this means, every one believes it, and yet with what languid interest do we hear it! That God has no favourites, that all is for all, that you and I and all men

> "Move
> Under a canopy of love,
> As broad as the blue sky above"—

this is one of the commonplaces of faith which we take for granted, as we take for granted to-morrow's sunrise or the recurring seasons.

One explanation of the revolt against Calvinism, one reason why that ancient creed has lost the hold that once it had on the minds and hearts of men, is to be found, I suppose, in this: that it limited, or seemed to limit, the grace of God. Some of our Nonconformist forefathers used to sing

> "We are a garden walled around,
> Chosen and made peculiar ground;
> A little spot enclosed by grace
> Out of the world's wide wilderness."

We should almost as soon think of wearing Elizabethan ruffs as of singing a hymn like that, so completely has the fashion of our religious thought changed. And, indeed, the whole tendency of modern thought, not only in religion, but also in social and political life, has served to throw into sharper relief the great universal words of the Christian Gospel. They fit the mood of the age, we accept them without argument like the axioms of Euclid, but they no longer fill us with wondering awe and exulting praise.

Yet it was not always so. Around this very truth, which to-day we assume with such careless ease, there raged the first and one of the sharpest

of the controversies of the Early Church. Was the Gospel for all men? Did Christ die for Gentiles as well as for Jews? Was His word a message for the multitudes, to be proclaimed on the housetops, in the hearing of all, or a secret to be whispered in the ears of the initiated few? And even yet, as we read Paul's letters, we can feel again the thrill of rapturous gladness with which the Apostle, himself a Jew, declared that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, that the middle wall of partition is for ever broken down, that "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel," that *all is for all.* The old Judaizing error is dead and buried, but the mighty truth with which the Apostle smote and slew it is ours as it was his. If it could but live for us as it lived for him! Christ died for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

The old Judaizing error, I say, is dead; but "take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." And men may "spoil" us in many ways. When, *e.g.* they speak as though the living waters were stored up in some great reservoir, and as if before the thirsty soul can drink and live, it must be connected by an elaborate system of man-made pipes, and that even then the supply is liable suddenly to be cut off—

when, I mean, they tell us that divine grace is ministered, and ministered only, by the Church, or the Priest, or the Sacraments—verily, they know not the mind of God, they know not what manner of spirit He is of. Christ gave Himself for all; His grace is free for all. The water of life has not to be "laid on" by any little arrangements of ours; the river rolls by every man's door, and he that will may drink and live. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

And indeed, when we consider what the Gospel is, we begin to understand that to be itself it must be universal. If religion were primarily an appeal to the intellect, if it ministered to wants that are local or individual merely, then might it be for one and not for another. But since its business is with sin, and all have sinned, since it offers to no man what every other man does not equally need, therefore must it be for every man. "Whosoever"—God Himself has traced the boundless circle, and not one life lies without its mighty rim.

III

Christ died for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. And now let us sharpen the blunt generality to this fine and penetrating point: "*He loved me*," says St. Paul, "*and gave Himself up for me.*" The law of divine grace is not only all for all, but all for each.

Conversely with what was stated above, this is

a truth that, perhaps, it was easier to believe once than to-day. In bygone days, when man thought of the earth as "the centre of a universe wherein all things were ordained for his sole behoof; the sun to give him light and warmth, the stars in their courses to preside over his strangely chequered destinies, the winds to blow, the floods to rise, or the fiend of pestilence to stalk abroad over the land—all for the blessing, or the warning, or the chiding, of the chief among God's creatures, Man": when men thought thus, I say, it must have been an easier thing for devout souls to look up and say, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself up for *me*," than it can be now. For the old astronomy has gone; instead of being the centre of all things, our earth is but a "third-rate planet of a third-rate sun," and in the vast readjustment of ideas that the change has brought, there are many that say unto us, "How shall He care though we perish?" Not only so, but as Mark Rutherford says, our little intellects are impotent "to conceive a destiny which shall take care of every atom of life on the globe; we are compelled to think that in such vast crowds of people as we behold, individuals must elude the eye of the Maker, and be swept into forgetfulness."

What shall we say to these things? To begin with, let us remember, as Mark Rutherford himself goes on to say, the truth of truths is that the mind of the universe is not our mind, or at any rate controlled by our limitations. And, above all, let

us fall back on the word of Christ, and the experience of the saints. "In Christ were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible, and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"; and *He* says, not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father; the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Or listen to the music of a psalm like this:—

> "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem;
> He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
> He healeth the broken in heart,
> And bindeth up their wounds.
> He telleth the number of the stars,
> He giveth them all their names.
> Great is our Lord, and mighty in power,
> His understanding is infinite."

Mark the order of the verses; there is a meaning in it: "He telleth the number of the stars"; yes, but the divinest thing in God's universe is not the power of the Creator; it is the stooping, pitying love of the Father: "He healeth the broken in heart."

> "'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
> 'Twas greater to redeem."

Dora Greenwell is very bold, but she is also very scriptural when she sings:—

> "And had there been in all this wide
> Wide world no other soul beside
> But only mine, then He had died
> That He might be its Saviour."

He loved *me* and gave Himself up for *me.*

IV

Christ died for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. He loved me, and gave Himself up for me; but, "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, *there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.*" I do not care to comment on words like these; I had rather they should stand in all their dread and simple sternness. But be it known unto us, the Cross is love's uttermost. He who can resist that can resist God's loudest appeal. "Last of all, He sent His Son"; and when Christ died the resources of heaven were exhausted, the divine quiver was empty, love itself had no more than it could do: "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but" instead "a certain fearful expectation of judgment."

I stood one day by Hartley Coleridge's grave in Grasmere Churchyard, and read on the simple headstone the touching prayer of our English Litany: "By Thy Cross and Passion, good Lord deliver us." And as I thought of the sad and

blighted life of him who slept below, it seemed like the piteous cry of a hunted soul, seeking its last refuge from the hell-hounds of sin: "By Thy Cross and Passion, good Lord deliver me." What other prayer, what other plea, have we?

> "This all my hope and all my plea,
> For me the Saviour died.

All? Yes; but, thank God, enough!

THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST HAS MADE

D

"*What was the change, what was the new force, or element, or aspect of the world, or assemblage of ideas, which proved able to make of society what Roman loftiness of heart, Roman sagacity, Roman patience, Roman strength had failed to make of it? What power was it which took up the discredited and hopeless work, and, infusing new energies and new hopes into men, has made the long history of the Western nations different in kind from any other period of the history of mankind; different in this, that though its march has been often very dark and very weary, often arrested and often retarded, chequered with terrible reverses, and stained by the most flagrant crimes, it has never been, definitely and for good, beaten back; the movement, as we can see when we review it, has been on the whole a uniform one, and has ever been tending onwards; it has never surrendered, and has never had reason to surrender, the hope of improvement, even though improvement might be remote and difficult. . . . It is a matter of historical fact, that in the closing days of Rome an entirely new set of moral ideas and moral purposes, of deep significance, fruitful in consequences, and of a strength and intensity unknown before, were making their way in society, and establishing themselves in it. It is to the awakening of this new morality, which has never perished out of the hearts of men from that day to this, that the efforts and the successes of modern civilisation are mainly due; it is on the permanence of these moral convictions that it rests. . . . And it is as clear and certain a fact of history that the coming in of Christianity was accompanied by new moral elements in society, inextinguishable, widely operative, never destroyed, though apparently at times crushed and paralysed, as it is certain that Christian nations have made on the whole more progress in the wise ordering of human life than was made in the most advanced civilisation of the times before Christianity.*"

DEAN CHURCH.

III

THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST HAS MADE

"*YE have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you*——" Christ was standing on the border-line between the Old Dispensation and the New. "Ye know," He seems to say, "what has been; hearken, and I will tell you what shall be." He points the contrast between a past that had been theirs, and the future that was to be, in a special sense, His. The contrast is one which was often present to our Lord's mind. It runs through a large part of the Sermon on the Mount, and it meets us repeatedly elsewhere in His recorded sayings. "Moses," He said, speaking on the question of divorce, "for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives, but——;" then He went on to lay down His own and higher law. "Among them that are born of women," He declared at another time, "there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater

than he." Christ knew Himself to be the Founder of a new order, the Beginner of a new time.

Those who first heard Him may well have listened with amazement at words so bold and yet so calmly spoken. We who read them, with nineteen centuries as their commentary, know how true they are. For us the one great dividing-line in the world's history is the coming of Christ. The whole story of the life of man on the earth is summed up for us under the familiar formula, "B.C.," "A.D."—the years before Christ, the years since Christ. Nor is this merely an act of reverence on the part of them that call Christ Jesus Lord; it is rather the instinctive expression of the world's deep-rooted consciousness that with Christ, as never before nor since, a new beginning was made, a new era opened.

This, then, is our subject—the difference Christ has made, the contrast between life as He found it and life as He has since been making it. And though I can touch but the fringe of a practically illimitable subject, we may at least be able to "sample" a few of the gains by which the world has been enriched through the coming of Christ.

I

Consider, in the first place, the difference which Christ has made in our thoughts of God. And in saying this, I am not thinking of any new and

unanswerable demonstration which Christ has given us of the existence of God. For arguments on that matter we must go not to the New Testament, but to the text-books of theology. This is not said to depreciate the value of such arguments, nor to challenge their validity, but only to indicate the difference of Christ's method. He approached the subject by a different path. He took it up at a point nearer to the actual facts of life and experience. Assuming, not proving, that God is,—assuming, too, that those to whom He spoke believed Him to be,—Christ sought to enable them to think true and worthy thoughts of God, to think of Him as He really is. In a word, Christ demonstrated not the existence but the nature and character of God. And the greatness of the service which thus He did to man, none of us can measure. We say sometimes that "ideas rule the world," but there is none that is so mightily regnant as our idea of God. The thought we make of God is the thought that makes us; it is fundamental, regulative of all our life.

What, then, is the new thought of God which we owe to Christ? Now it will be seen how much larger my subject is than my treatment of it can possibly be. Two or three sentences must contain all I can attempt by way of answer. If we have emptied our thought of God of all that debased and belittled Him, if we have felled the monstrous growths of superstition that darkened

and poisoned our life, if God is no longer to us an angry Deity needing to be appeased with blood, if He is no longer a far-off Deity, cold and distant as His stars, who will not hear us though we cry long unto Him—it is to Christ that we owe it. And if, on the other hand, we have any thoughts of God that are pure and tender and loving and true, if we can believe that He cares for all men and that His love gathers up all, even the poor and the weak and the outcast of every nation and kindred and tongue, within its mighty arms, if our weariness can lean on Him and our loneliness find refuge in Him, if we and all men when we pray may look up and say, "Father," again it is to Christ that we owe it. Read what religion means in lands to-day where the light of His Gospel has not come; read the story of the nations without and around Israel of old; nay, read the sacred books—the Old Testament—of Israel itself, and then turn again to the words of Jesus and read once more the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, the tender intimacies of the upper room; turn, above all, to that which told what words could never tell—His death for men—and you will begin to understand something of the measureless change which Christ has wrought in the thoughts of men concerning God. Indeed, I believe it has come to this, that for us the choice lies between God in Christ and no God at all. Either we

must think Christ's thoughts of God or we shall refuse to think of Him altogether. It may be true that dogmatic atheism is to-day universally discredited if not actually dead, but practical atheism—under whatever name it may disguise itself—and the Christian faith remain our only alternatives. He who spoke unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son, and if we turn from Him we put out the only light which can lead our wandering feet back to God.

II

The difference which Christ has made may be illustrated in another way. One of the greatest and most fruitful ideas buried deep in the heart of the world to-day is our reverence for human life, our sense of the worth, the dignity, the divinity of man. Whence came it? It did not exist in the ancient world; as a matter of historical fact it did not. It is just here, one historian tells us, we find the key to the difference between ancient and modern civilization: modern civilization aims at the common weal of the people; ancient civilization thought only of the interests of the favoured few. The population of Rome during the first century of the Christian era was 1,610,000, and, of that number, 900,000 were slaves. Think of it — three out of five of the men and women whom Paul passed on the streets of the Imperial City slaves, with less rights in

the eyes of the law than your dog! For the law to-day will not suffer you to treat your dumb animal as any Roman slave-owner might treat his slave with impunity. One famous thinker of antiquity speaks of tools, living and lifeless; and by a living tool he meant, of course, a slave.

The evidence may be stated in a form that to some will appeal more powerfully even than facts like these. Here and there in our own Scriptures we have very interesting side-lights thrown upon the conditions of life before Christ came, especially as they affected women and children. In the Book of Exodus, *e.g.* we read of a census of the children of Israel taken by Moses. What a census in our land to-day means we all know; but in Israel only the men over twenty were numbered — the women and children did not count. Similarly, in our Lord's parable of the Unmerciful Servant, we read of a certain king who, when one of the servants was unable to pay what he owed, "commanded him to be sold, *and his wife and children and all that he had*, and payment to be made." The picture is true to the life of the time: the wife and children were marketable goods which might be disposed of like anything else which their owner possessed. One of the slight changes which the Revisers of the New Testament have introduced is full of significance when read in this same connection. In the Authorised Version we are told that when the disciples returned to Jesus and found Him

in conversation with the woman of Samaria, they marvelled that He talked "with the woman"; but the true rendering is "with a woman"; what astonished the disciples was not merely that their Master should talk with this woman, but that He should talk with a woman at all.

Now you know how we have changed all this; say, rather, how *Christ* has changed all this, for that is the simple, historical fact. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." He it was who first taught us that God is no respecter of persons, that all are His children and all are dear to Him. When, in the days of His flesh, He lived among men, no one was more to Him because of his riches nor less because of his poverty. Rank and social distinctions were less than nothing in His eyes; it was man as man for whom He cared. And above all, in taking upon Him our human nature He showed what it might become, what God meant it to be. The Incarnation is the revelation not only of the love and condescension of God, but of the greatness and glory of man which sin had obscured but could not destroy. It implies, as Dr. Dale has said, a certain kinship between God and man.

It has taken the world long centuries to learn the significance of all this. Even yet it does not fully comprehend it. But in the degree in which the truth has been realized man has sought the deliverance and redemption of his fellow-men. From it, as the flower from its seed, there sprang

in the fulness of time the movement which freed the slave, the mighty tree of modern philanthropy whose branches cover the whole earth, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

If it be said that there are many to-day who hold as firmly as we to "the freedom and divinity of man," and yet acknowledge no allegiance to Christ, the answer is simple: the statement is true, but it is nothing to the point.

> "Most can raise the flowers now,
> For all have got the seed;"

but it was Christ who gave us the seed. All that is best in our modern civilization goes back to Him as its source and fount. He is the founder of the new social order, the maker and builder of that fair City of God, which slowly through the ages is rising out of the wreck and chaos of man's sin.

III

And as Christ has changed our conception of man, so also has He changed our ideals of duty. Several points of contrast between Christian and pre-Christian morality He Himself has indicated in the Sermon on the Mount; but setting aside details which cannot now be considered, and speaking of Christ's teaching as a whole, it may be said that He did special honour to a new type of virtues. The ancient world laid its emphasis on what may be called the masculine virtues—strength, courage, endurance, and so forth. Nor

does the New Testament speak one word in disparagement of these; yet a man might possess them all and still not be the man whom Christ pronounced supremely blessed. Blessed, He said, are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake; and for the first time, as has been well said, "a halo rests on gentleness, patience, kindness, and sanctity."

The difference cannot be better illustrated, perhaps, than by the Christian law of forgiveness. If the world has come to believe that it is a right and worthy thing for a man to forgive his enemies, and if in any degree it is willing to prove its faith by its works, it is certainly to Christ that we owe it. Nor is this merely the pious opinion of a preacher anxious to secure as much credit for Christianity as he can. It is a fact as capable of historical demonstration as the indebtedness of law to Rome or of art to Greece. "In the law of forgiveness, and still more in the law of unlimited forgiveness," says the author of *Ecce Homo*, "a startling shock was given to the prevailing beliefs and notions of mankind. And by this law an ineffaceable and palpable division has been made between ancient and modern morality. . . . Undoubtedly friends fell out and were reconciled in antiquity as amongst ourselves. But where the only relation between the two parties was that of injurer and injured, and the only claim of

the offender to forgiveness was that he was a human being, there forgiveness seems not only not to have been practised, but not to have been enjoined nor approved. People not only did not forgive their enemies, but did not wish to do so, nor think better of themselves for having done so. That man considered himself fortunate who, on his deathbed, could say, in reviewing his past life, that no one had done more good to his friends, or more mischief to his enemies." [1]

Look at these two strangely contrasted pictures —one from the Old Testament, the other from the New, and say what has wrought the change. "And the Spirit of God came upon Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord that ye cannot prosper? . . . And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. . . . And when he died he said, The Lord look upon it and require it."

[1] The following note on Tennyson's beautiful poem "Œnone" will be read with interest in this connection: "Critics have called attention to the absence of the genuine antique spirit from this poem. And it is, no doubt, observable that Tennyson's representation of Œnone's character contains little or no suggestion of that bitter resentment and implacable vengeance which a poet of ancient Greece would have thought it correct, from both a moral and an artistic standpoint, to instil into her words. In making Œnone tell her tale, more in sorrow than in anger, Tennyson has appealed to the more modern, more Christian, idea, 'To err is human, to forgive divine.'"

"But Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God; and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. . . . And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. . . . And he kneeled down and cried out with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Zechariah and Stephen were both good men, men of God; yet while one with his dying breath cries aloud to the God of heaven for vengeance upon his foes, the other prays that his may be forgiven. What has wrought the change? There is but one answer: between Zechariah and Stephen there came One who said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you," and of whom it is written, "And when they came unto the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" This is the difference that Christ has made. With His nailed hands He built the bridge across the gulf that divides them that cry for vengeance from them that pray for pardon.

IV

Lastly, mark the difference which Christ has made in our thoughts of death. The comparisons

which men sometimes make between Jesus and other great teachers never seem so wholly futile and barren as they do here. Comparison, indeed, is impossible, for no other has ever attempted what Christ has actually done for us in presence of the dread mystery of the grave. Here are two or three simple facts, such as any one may gather, and whose significance no one can miss :—

We read the familiar words of the great and noble Greek as he turned from his judges to death, we remember with what thoughts of the future Hezekiah was brought down to the gates of the grave—how shadowy and silent seemed to them the great land beyond ; and then we listen again to the quiet confidence, the ringing exultation of the apostle, "To me to die is gain ;" "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

Recent excavations in the neighbourhood of Athens have brought to light a large number of inscribed and sculptured gravestones which reveal to us in very striking fashion "the Greek mind in presence of death."[1] They show how to the popular mind throughout Greece the future state was but "a shadowy realm, a poor washed-out copy of the brilliant life on earth." "She who lies here," runs one inscription, "coveted not, while alive, garments or gold, but desired discretion and virtue. And now, Dionysia, in place of youth

[1] See a very interesting paper bearing this title in *The Contemporary Review*, December 1877, by Percy Gardner.

and bloom, the Fates have awarded thee this sepulchre." There was no denial of a future, but it was rarely thought of; it was "a cold shadow to be kept out of sunny life as much as might be." And thus these all died in fear, not having received the promises, and with at most a faint, tremulous hope that it might not be wholly ill with them, that out of the night some good perchance might fall to them. But the moment we come upon the Christian epitaphs at Athens "a sudden and marvellous change," we are told, "takes place": "To the Christian the place of interment is no longer a tomb, but a sleeping-place."

The same contrast meets us again in the catacombs of Rome. There on the one side, is blank despair or impious defiance; here, on the other, hope and joy and peace. There you may read "Vale! vale! in æternum vale!"—"Farewell, farewell, for ever farewell!"—here the sweet old words "In Christo," "In pace," "In spe"—"in Christ," "in peace," "in hope."

And what a witness do our own churchyards bear to the difference that Christ has made! On costly marble statues and on simple wooden crosses, amid the quiet of lonely hills and the hum of busy cities, in our own language wherein we were born and in the language of strangers—everywhere we may read the common speech of a deathless hope: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live."

And this hope is theirs alone who are sure of Christ. There was a time when men who doubted or denied the Christian revelation, yet built their hopes for the future on what they called the "natural immortality of the soul." But when this doctrine is itself assailed by orthodox Christian divines,[1] it is obvious how precarious are all our reasonings that do not rest on Christ. Nor can He bear this weight except He be the Divine Son of God. Creeds that can find no room for the Divinity of Christ grow every day more timorous concerning the future. Men may reverence Him as the Man of Nazareth, but if they do not adore Him as the Lord of Glory, they falter in the presence of death. "Man's hope," said Robert Elsmere, as he stood by the grave of his friend Grey, and listened to the triumphant language of the Burial Service, "has grown humbler than this. It keeps now a more modest mien in the presence of the Eternal Mystery." I read the following touching notice in the columns of a literary journal some years ago :—

> "This is to tell their loved and loving friends that ——, the dear, dear wife of —— died at their home —— on the afternoon of Monday ——.
>
> In her shy, tiny body there lived a great and sweet soul. Think of her sometimes, so that she who loved life so well may, at least, live on in that best immortality of unforgetting love."

[1] I refer (without endorsing) to the recent declarations of Dr. Agar Beet and Canon Gore. See the former's *Last Things*, and the latter's *Epistle to the Romans*, vol. i.

The writer was a well-known man of letters; he takes a kindly interest in religion, but its deepest truths are still hidden from him; and when he laid his young wife in the grave this was the best he dare hope for—an "immortality of unforgetting love." But ours is a better hope, sure and steadfast, given unto us by Him whom John heard saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions; *if it were not so I would have told you.*" We are sure of the future because we are sure of Christ.

"The old things are passed away; behold they are become new."

This is the difference that Christ has made.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND
THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL.

"*To the Apostles the insistence on the Sermon on the Mount as the sum of Christianity would have appeared a relapse into hopeless paganism.*"—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL.

IV

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

I HAD been conducting Divine worship in a London church. At the close of the service, a minister, who chanced to be in the congregation, said to me, with a touch of that irreverence of which we ministers are sometimes guilty, "Hang theology! Let us get to life." As I had preached what is sometimes known as a "practical" sermon, I suppose the remark was intended as a compliment. It was a warm week-day afternoon, and perhaps my friend was thankful that he had been able to listen without being compelled unduly to think. Be that as it may, I did not altogether appreciate the compliment, and certainly neither then nor at any other time had I any thoughts of "hanging" theology. Nevertheless, if I mistake not, the feeling which lay behind the chance remark of my hearer that afternoon is one that is very widespread. We may not express ourselves in

terms quite so blunt, at least not in Scotland, where the traditional respect for things theological is still very strong; yet there are multitudes of intelligent Christian men and women in all our churches to-day who can only listen with a Gallio-like impatience to an exposition or discussion of the great doctrines of the Christian creed. "Never mind doctrine," they say; "give us the Sermon on the Mount. Why should we vex our brains about miracles and the supernatural, the great mysteries of the Incarnation or the Atonement or the Resurrection? What doth the Lord our God require of us but that we should believe in the Beatitudes and do unto others as we would that others should do unto us?"

This is a cry which one hears incessantly in our current religious literature. "Morality," says one writer, "was the essence of Christ's system, theology was an after-thought." A very distinguished Biblical student, whose death a few years ago seemed an irreparable loss to sacred scholarship, began his last work with a pointed contrast between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed. "The Sermon on the Mount," he says, "is the promulgation of a new law of conduct . . . The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences . . . The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers. . . . An ethical sermon stood in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus Christ and a

metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century." And, to take but one other illustration, we are told in a recent volume by a popular writer that "among all the creeds of Christendom the only one which has the authority of Christ Himself is the Sermon on the Mount. When one reads the creed which was given by Jesus and the creeds which have been made by Christians, he cannot fail to detect an immense difference, and it does not matter whether he selects the Nicene Creed or the Westminster Confession. They all have a family likeness to each other, and a family unlikeness to the Sermon on the Mount." And these things, after being thought and written in the study, have gradually filtered down to the street, until now we are met on every side with the cry, "Do not trouble us with Christian doctrine, give us Christian morality; stick to the Sermon on the Mount."

Nor is the demand wholly without reason. It is in part and with some a healthy revolt from that barren and empty orthodoxy which shortens the commandments while it lengthens the creed, and which has been the abomination of desolation set up in the Christian Church through all the centuries of its chequered history. By all means let us stick to the Sermon on the Mount. If only we were all half as eager to obey its precepts as some of us are to applaud them the world would speedily become a much better place to live in. But what I want to make clear is this, that no one

can hold to the Sermon on the Mount, unless he is prepared to hold to very much else besides. Accept this and you must accept much more than this. And, further, the Sermon on the Mount is not and was not meant to be God's first and last word to man. If Christ had only set before us this awful height, and had not then begun to build the steps by which we may climb to it, He had but left us in despair, and our last state had been worse than our first.

These are the two points I wish now briefly to emphasize. But before doing so, let me add one other word by way of parenthesis. Do not, I beseech you, have any part or lot in this unworthy clamour against theology. Let it be admitted that the Church has often obstinately clung to worn-out forms which have lost the meaning which was once their life; that she has often blindly refused to readjust her doctrines to the new revelations of a new time; that, indeed, theologians have themselves sometimes been theology's worst enemies. Nevertheless, so long as man believes in a God, and so long as he can think, so long will he continue to fashion for himself a theology of one kind or another. "But," some one may ask, "if we have the New Testament, what more do we want?" Well, and we have the rocks and the stars which every man can see, yet I never heard it suggested that, therefore, geology and astronomy are useless, and our science classes a waste of time. "Yes," you

reply, "but our sciences are only the orderly grouping of the observed facts of nature in the heavens above, and the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. Geology—that is simply the rocks over again, but the rocks arranged, classified, labelled." Precisely, and in so saying you have furnished at once the definition and the vindication of theology; it is man's attempt to set forth in orderly array and system the truths of Divine Revelation. Some who read these words may find little interest in theological inquiries, their tastes and gifts may lead them in other directions; but at least let them pray to be delivered from the intellectual littleness that has only scorn for the earnest and patient toil of generations of saintly thinkers pondering the deep things of God.

But this, as I said, is a parenthesis. I return to the two points which I have named for special emphasis.

I

When men cry "A fig for your theology! Give us the Sermon on the Mount," they are really asking, little as they realize it, an impossible thing. For the truth is, the Sermon on the Mount is saturated with theological ideas. I do not mean that the theology is set forth explicitly and in detail as it is, *e.g.* in the Nicene Creed; nevertheless, it is there, implicit if not explicit, always assumed, if not distinctly formulated.

When men speak as if the Sermon consisted only of a few beautiful and simple moral ideas, the only charitable conclusion to which we can come is that they have never carefully read it for themselves. Its morality and theology are inextricably interwoven throughout. Accept the Sermon, the whole of the Sermon, and all that the Sermon fairly implies, and you have already the beginnings of a system of Christian doctrine. Let me illustrate what I mean.

We will begin with its most familiar words: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father——" But stay, already we have an implied doctrine of God and of prayer. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And now to our doctrines of God and of prayer we have added a doctrine of sin and of the forgiveness of sin. A few verses farther on in the Sermon we come upon this: "Be not, therefore, anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Here, manifestly, is a doctrine of Divine Providence; and as the Sermon draws to its close it is with a vision of judgment and of the future: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name. and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy

name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Again, as has been truly said, the motives to which the pure and lofty morality of the Sermon appeals are purely theological. "We are to do good"—I quote Dr. Samuel Cox's convenient summing-up—"hoping for nothing in return, we are to give alms without advertising them, we are to love all men, even our enemies, we are to requite good for evil, and give a blessing for a curse, not from any merely ethical motive, but from purely religious motives, that we may please our Father who seeth in secret, that we may prove ourselves to be His children, that we may become perfect, even as He is perfect. We are not to be careful because our Father careth for us; we are to forgive because He has forgiven us; we are to ask for what we want, because our Father knows how to give His good gifts; and we are not to be importunate in our prayers, because our Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask Him. In short, the whole round of motives in this Sermon is purely theological."

We have not exhausted the theology of this so-called "ethical sermon" yet. The most important point still remains: who is the Preacher? The question cannot be evaded. The Speaker Himself forces it upon us, for He speaks throughout in His own name, He rests all these great moral demands on His own authority. This it

was which caught the attention of the multitudes, and filled them with astonishment: "He taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes." And when we read the Sermon it is not difficult to understand their wonderment. Over against the solemn "Thus saith the Lord" of the Old Testament He sets His own simple "I say unto you." He is the Finisher of that law of which Moses and the prophets were the authors; in Him as in a centre converge all the rays of the earlier revelation. He not only bids His disciples pray, He teaches them how to pray, by what name they shall name God when they come into His presence. He speaks throughout as one who is at home in the eternal world, familiar with the secret counsels of the Most High God. He divides men, saying who are fit and who are unfit for a place in the kingdom of heaven; yet He does not argue, He simply affirms that things are as He says they are. And most amazing of all, He lifts for a moment the veil that hides the future, and He declares that in that unseen world beyond, it shall be well or it shall be ill with men, according as they have obeyed or disobeyed *His* words.

Now who, what, is He who thus speaks to us? Surely, if (as I am supposing) we accept the moral precepts of the Sermon on the Mount as binding upon ourselves, that is a question to which, as reasoning and reasonable men, we are bound to have an answer. The words themselves

are great, but He who is behind them is far greater, and we want some account of Him. But now, do you not see, we have passed again, almost without realizing it, into the region of things doctrinal; and we stand at this moment on the margin of the greatest of all theological questions, viz. the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course I am not going to discuss that now; but I hope enough has been said to show that those great creeds of the ancient Church, which even wise men to-day sometimes affect to make light of, were in reality the attempt, the honest and earnest attempt, of the Church to realize its own consciousness, and to throw into definite and memorable form the faith which, not then for the first time, but through all her history, she had held concerning Him whom she worshipped as Lord, and whose words she received as Divine. If it be said that the attempt was not always successful, and that in any case it is idle to imagine that we can tie men down to-day to any form of words, however admirable and venerable they may be, I am not anxious to dispute the matter. But this I will be bold to say—that if a man will take the three chapters of Matthew's Gospel which contain the Sermon on the Mount, and will follow out the lines which, with a blundering hand, I have endeavoured to trace, and will answer the questions which I have raised, he will end with a doctrine of the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount not easily to be distinguished from the

Christ of St. Paul's Epistles, or, as I believe, of even the despised Nicene Creed.

II

The Sermon on the Mount is not, and was not meant to be, the sum and substance of the Christian Gospel. To identify these two things—the Sermon and the Gospel—is to ignore nine-tenths of the New Testament, and to make the whole of it, including the Sermon, ineffectual and inoperative. And to establish this it is unnecessary to go farther than the words of Christ Himself. The writer, whose words I have quoted above, speaks of the Sermon on the Mount as "the creed of Jesus." But by what right do we separate this from the rest of the recorded teaching of Christ, and give to it this lofty and lonely pre-eminence? If we are to draw up a "creed of Jesus" at all, will not this need to be in, "I and My Father are one"? and this, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"? and this, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life"? and this, "Ye must be born again." The Sermon on the Mount the creed of Jesus? There is warrant neither in Scripture nor in reason for the limitation.

"Back to Christ," men cry. Yes; but to what Christ? To the Christ of the whole Gospels, and

all the Gospels—the Christ of the Fourth as well as of the First Gospel—the Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, who wrought great miracles, who died on Calvary, who rose again from the dead, who ascended into heaven, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us? Back to that Christ? Amen and amen! He it is whom, through all her history, the Church has worshipped as Lord and God; we live but as we live in Him. But if when men say, "Back to Christ," they mean "Back to Jesus of Nazareth, a good man who went about doing good, who spake undying words of truth and love, and died a holy martyr's death"—if that is all they mean we can only answer, "No! ten thousand times no!" for there is not, and there never has been, and there never can be, salvation by example or ethics alone, even though they be the example and ethics of Jesus.

What is it that has given to the words of Jesus their unique power in the minds and hearts of men? Is it not the fact that they are *His* words, the words of Him whose glory John beheld, "glory as of the only begotten from the Father"? And separate from Him, they are lifeless, and ineffectual, and proclaim no gospel. It is in the revelation of what He was and did even more than in what He said of His Life and Death, even more than in His words that men have found healing and peace. As Dr. Dale has said with profound truth, Christ came not so

much to preach a Gospel as rather that there might be a Gospel to preach. His coming meant much more than the issue of a revised and enlarged edition of the Moral Law; it meant the bringing in of a new power that should make for righteousness; it meant the pouring of a new tide of life into the world's poor shrunken veins. And until we understand this, the New Testament will remain, for the most part, a sealed book to us. Paul and John and Peter have comparatively little to say in exposition of the moral precepts of Jesus; it is upon Himself and the mighty work He wrought that they fix their adoring eyes; and however we may stumble at it, it is difficult to believe that either the Apostle himself or those who had put themselves to school with his Epistle to the Colossians, would have hesitated to sign their acceptance of the Nicene Creed.

Nor is there, in all this—need it be said?—any depreciation of the Sermon on the Mount. The foolish and superficial persons who dismiss it as "mere morality" may themselves be dismissed without further notice. It is rather, as one writer well says, "the summit of Christianity, a summit which the farthest-climbing saints see far off in the dim distance." But what I want us to realize is, that if all that Christ had done for us had been to set up this fair ideal, then had He never been the world's Saviour. My old theological professor staggered some of us in his class-room one day when he told us bluntly, that if we only had the

Sermon on the Mount we should be lost. But one at least of his students has learned the truth of his words. Men are not going astray because there is no one to cry, "This is the way, walk ye in it"; they are not stumbling into the pit because there is no one to warn them of their peril. The Sermon on the Mount is the law for them that have entered into life; it is not the way of life itself.

Does any one doubt it? Then let him appeal to the religious history of our own land. The Church has tried the experiment, more than once, and on a pretty large scale, of preaching morality apart from Christ. We tried it in England in the eighteenth century, we tried it in Scotland during the dreary reign of "Moderatism"; and with what results in each case no one needs to be told. And if this is not sufficient, let him repeat the experiment for himself to-day. Let him go down to the dark places of our great cities, and gather about him the drunkard, the profligate, and the criminal; let him tell them to be loving and honest and pure, to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them,—let him tell them that and no more than that, and see what will come of it. And if he is still unsatisfied, let him come nearer home still. Let him set before himself the awful height of Christ's great words, and begin to climb and see how soon it will be before the cry will be wrung from him, "Who is sufficient for those things?" Ah, yes;

when a man is a cripple, it is not a guide-post that he needs, but strength wherewith to walk. The sublimest precepts can never quicken into life them that are dead in trespasses and sins.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? "Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The top of the ladder rests on that shining summit; but the foot of it is down here in the horrible pit and miry clay of man's sin; and the first rungs in the ladder are these, "Repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The perfection of God—that is the end of the way whose entrance is the strait gate of penitence. If we turn to Him, He will forgive us, and His forgiveness shall be as "the first link of a golden chain unwinding from His hand, by which we may ascend to the perfect possession of our inheritance in God."

CHRIST'S APPEAL TO THE INTELLECT

"*God reasons with man—that is the first article of religion, according to Isaiah. Revelation is not magical, but rational and moral. Religion is reasonable intercourse between one intelligent Being and another.*"—GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

"*Human nature craves to be both religious and rational. And the life which is not both is neither.*"—AUBREY L. MOORE.

V

CHRIST'S APPEAL TO THE INTELLECT

"*THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;*" that is to say, Christianity claims the homage of the whole man. The "heart" is named, first, as "the central focus from which all the rays of the moral life go forth."[1] Then come the three forms of activity in which that life manifests itself—the soul, the mind, the strength, or, as we should say to-day, the feelings, the intellect, the will. And all these, Christ says, have their place in religion; they are all to be pressed into the Divine service: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

Here, however, it is of the relation of the intellect to Christ that I wish especially to speak. And I single out this aspect of the whole subject, not because it is the most important, but because it is that of which we think least. We know, if

[1] Godet.

we are Christians, that our affections must go out towards Christ, that our will must bow to Him; but the duty of our intellect is to many of us far from clear. We mourn when our rebellious wills mutter against Him, when the fires of our spiritual fervour die down; but our imperfect comprehension of His truth causes us little or no concern. We have forgotten that He has commanded us to love God, not only with our heart and soul and strength, but also with our *mind;* and it is of this forgotten duty that I want now to speak.

I

Religion, then, let it be clearly understood, does appeal to the intellect; it would have reason as its ally; it seeks from man a reasonable service.

But, unfortunately, men have often come to look upon reason as the natural enemy of faith; they have resented its just claims as though they were the arrogant pretensions of an intruder; they have treated it as an alien power, which, as Dr. Dale says, "must be fettered, manacled, and imprisoned, if it is to be prevented from tearing up the very foundations of the City of God." It was that feeling that carried John Henry Newman over into the Roman Catholic Church. It seemed to him, as he read the history of the world, that the tendency of reason was, always and everywhere, towards unbelief. What, he asked himself, could withstand and baffle "the all-corroding, all-dissolv-

ing scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries"? And he found the answer, as he thought, in a Church "invested with the prerogative of infallibility in religious matters."

It is easy to criticize Newman; but even among us Protestants are there not some who regard the intellect with secret misgivings and suspicion, and sometimes even are ready, in the name of religion, to coerce and fetter it? They shrink from inquiry; they listen with vague terror to every new doctrine of science or suggestion of criticism, and, long before they understand, make haste to condemn. Let a young man be found guilty of questioning one of the Church's accepted doctrines, and though he be a fellow church-member, they will straightway give him the cold shoulder, and perhaps even suggest in private that his morals are no better than they should be. It has been openly stated that the late Charles Bradlaugh received his first impulse towards infidelity from the harsh and unsympathetic treatment of a Christian minister, to whom, in the perplexities of his youth, he turned for guidance.

Now, undoubtedly, there is a possible misuse of the intellect, which is sin, and which ought to be condemned as sin, just as there may be misuse of the other powers of man. There are sins of pride, of prejudice, of overweening confidence, to which the intellect must plead guilty. When, *e.g.* it has regard not to the whole facts, but only to what it chooses to see; when it pushes beyond

its own province, and makes itself judge of all things in heaven and earth; above all, when it seeks to lord it over the conscience, and, justifying by logic that which a louder voice condemns, becomes "procuress to the Lords of Hell,"—then its condemnation is just, and cannot be too severe.

And, further, it is, of course, true that Christ's appeal is not primarily to the intellect; and the conversion of the intellect often fails, as we all know, to carry with it the conversion of the whole man. Thus, *e.g.* in the religious controversies of the eighteenth century it is now generally admitted that the victory lay with the champions of orthodoxy, not with their Deistical opponents,[1] and this at the very time when practical religion was at its lowest ebb. So that, as one historian of the period says, Christianity in England was in this strange position: "It had been irrefragably proved, as against its then opponents; it was established speculatively on the firmest of firm bases; but speculation was not carried into practice. The doctrine was accepted, but the life was not lived." Christian thinkers and apologists, with Bishop Butler at their head, had stormed and captured the mind of England; it still remained for Wesley and Whitefield to win its

[1] "They [the Deists] are but a ragged regiment whose whole ammunition of learning was a trifle when compared with the abundant stores of a single light of orthodoxy; whilst in speculative ability they were children by the side of some of their antagonists."—*Leslie Stephen* (quoted in Overton's *Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century*).

heart and soul, and lay the whole land at the feet of Christ.

Nevertheless, whatever may be the sins of the intellect, and true as it is that Christ's appeal is not addressed primarily to it, the fact remains: the intellect has its part in the religious life, and they who in the name of religion would bind it in chains, only reveal thereby that they have not the mind of Christ. For, consider: man is one; and how can that which mocks and insults my reason command my conscience? That were an outrage upon the unity of the nature which God has given me. "Human nature," it has been finely said, "craves to be both religious and rational. And the life which is not both is neither." And, further, is not poor, despised reason itself God's gift to man? Is it not part of the Divine image, with which, at his creation, He endowed him? And is it conceivable that God, by grace, shall so undo His work by nature as to make the putting out of the eyes of our understanding the first condition of His saving us?

What saith the Scripture? Is there any warrant there for the contumely which men have poured upon the reason? If there be, I do not know where to find it. On the contrary, I find all through the Bible appeals addressed to men as reasoning and reasonable creatures. The first article of religion according to Isaiah, says one of the prophet's best interpreters, is this: God reasons with man. Indeed, God's controversy

with His people was on this very ground. They would not *think:* "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The Psalmist prayed, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy precepts." Christ bade us love the Lord our God with all our mind; and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has long complaint to make against his readers, because of their imperfect understanding of Christian doctrine: "When," he says, "by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." "Wherefore," he exhorts them, "let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection."

But the example of Paul is, perhaps, our best answer to them that look upon religion as the enemy of reason. Here is his missionary method, as described by St. Luke: "Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them [the Jews at Thessalonica], and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead." Nor do we find that this "reasoning" produced either in St. Paul or in his hearers any of those terrible effects which to Newman seemed inevitable; for, in the same chapter, Luke tells us, the Beræans "received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the

scriptures daily, whether these things were so. *Many of them therefore believed.*" So far was the Apostle's faith from silencing his reason that it gave to it freer play than ever. The mental strenuousness of his Epistles is almost as marked as the glow of their spiritual devotion; and there is hardly a letter from his pen which does not imply that he expects in his converts the same vigorous thought concerning religion that he gave to it himself. "Prove all things," he bade the Thessalonians; "hold fast that which is good." "And this I pray," he told the Philippians, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent." Indeed it was, as Dr. Stalker has said, specially in the region of the intellect that Christianity laid hold of Paul. It was to him a message of truth—truth concerning God, the world, and himself. "There was plenty of emotion besides; but the emotion for him came after the clear intellectual conviction, and sprang out of it"; so that, as Dr. Stalker goes on to say, "Christianity, as it went through the cities of the world in St. Paul's person, must have gone as a great intellectual awakening, which taught men to use their minds, investigating the profoundest problems of life."

It would not be difficult, I think, to push the argument a step farther, and to show how almost all the great religious movements of history on their human side originated in and were shaped

by some strong and sanctified intellect. But I may not pursue that path now. Let me add these two words: (1) Inasmuch as Christ makes His appeal to the intellect, it is always the duty of the Church to make its faith reasonable to reasonable minds. In itself, and as it is, it is so; it is for us to show that it is so. We must make Divine truth living for the intellect in order that it may be regal for the conscience. (2) If Christ does not fear to trust Himself and His claims to the judgment of man's reason, neither should we. Is it not time that Christian men and women had outgrown the panics of fear that still sometimes seize us at the mere mention of some new suggestion by students of science or religion? Intellectual fear on God's behalf is always stupid impiety. True, scholarship is not infallible and may blunder; but its blunders can be corrected not by ignorance, however pious, but only by a wiser and truer scholarship. Therefore let us, whose are neither the duties nor the responsibilities of the scholar, have faith in God and go on with our work.

II

Thus far I have been endeavouring to vindicate the rights of the intellect in relation to religion. It remains for me now briefly to emphasize its duties. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind": where that commandment is

disobeyed and the service of the mind is withheld from God, the vigour of the whole religious life is impaired and its development checked.

The duty of religious thoughtfulness, by which I mean the duty of thinking upon and thinking out the great truths of Divine revelation is to-day very imperfectly realized even by devout and intelligent Christians. Our modern impatience of theology, our unwillingness to face and "tackle" its deepest problems, the dearth among us of really great theologians, all seem to indicate a feebler recognition on the part of the Christian Church of our obligation to serve God with our mind. We have been lured by the cry for a more practical religion into the neglect of the duty of intellectual toil. But it is in the interests of practical religion itself that we ought to resist the temptation. The Church is never safe, and her whole duty to the world is never fulfilled, except when evangelistic activity and sacred speculation go hand in hand. Let me make my meaning plainer by one or two illustrations.

Take the history of religion in Scotland. There you have, as all the world knows, a people peculiarly distinguished for their interest in grave matters of theological inquiry, who have not hesitated to deal, sometimes in the most trenchant and confident fashion, with the greatest mysteries of our faith. And, undoubtedly, they have often in this way laid themselves open to the gibes of their shallower, if more nimble-witted, neighbours

in the south. But will any one deny who knows Scotland, that it is this habit of resolutely facing some of the deepest questions of life and thought that has given to the Scottish character its intellectual vigour, its sturdy strength, its manly piety? There were humble village churches in the last century, like Boston of Ettrick's, that were centres of intellectual stimulus to a whole countryside. I have read of a Scottish farmer who walked fifty miles every Sabbath day to hear Boston work his way through the "Fourfold State." Well, the times have changed; but does any one suppose that a sensuous and elaborate ritualism, that can only spare ten or fifteen minutes during the hour of public worship for definite instruction in the things of God, will do for this generation what the preaching of men like Thomas Boston did for Scotland nearly two hundred years ago?

Or come nearer home and look at the work of the Salvation Army. I have no words in which to speak my admiration of the magnificent heroism with which the Army has set itself to solve some of the worst problems of our time; but even its warmest friends cannot shut their eyes to the utter inadequacy of its provision for the growth and development of the spiritual life of those whom it has rescued. It may be said that the Army is recruited for the most part from the gutter, and that its converts are usually men and women of a very low degree of intellectual attain-

ment. I can only reply, the greater is the need of careful Christian instruction. It was with just such materials Paul built up many of the first Christian churches, and it was to men with just such a past he addressed his wonderful, thought-stirring letters. It is, perhaps, no wonder that in the joy of saving men we sometimes forget the duty of nurturing them ; yet we may receive it as an axiom in all our work that "when the intellect has no part, or very little part, in the religious life, the religious life will never have in it the elements of enduring vigour."

It would be interesting to read over again the history of the Methodist Church in the light of what has just been said. But I have no space to say more than this, that if there, too, there are perilous tendencies needing to be watched, the history of Methodism itself should suggest the necessary safeguards. For never, perhaps, since St. Paul, has the Church shown such an example of the strong thinker aflame with the zeal of the evangelist, as in the life and work of John Wesley. And if Methodism is to continue to flourish it must know, like its founder, both how to reason and how to plead. If it fail to do either it will soon cease to do both.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? In the first place, let those who are already in the ministry, and young men who seek to enter it, and the whole Church of Christ, keep steadily in mind that this is a work which

demands the very best of which a man is capable and which the Church can produce. In a recent little work on the Erskines, the founders of the Secession Church of Scotland, we are told that though urgent requests for "supply of sermon" poured in upon the newly-formed Presbytery from clamant parishes in all parts of the country, the seceders firmly refused to ordain any one who had not been as fully trained as the law of the Church of Scotland required. It would be well for the Church of Christ if her leaders to-day would always show a like courage and foresight. Better, far better, that we should suffer temporary inconvenience and loss than that the standard of ministerial efficiency should be lowered, and incompetent workmen thrust into God's harvest field.

But, above all, we need as individual Christians to learn that we owe to Christ the service of our minds. "As long," says Dr. Dale, "as men are unwilling to serve God with their understanding, they withhold from Him half His claims." Deep and earnest feeling is good; and if a man's religion never sets him on fire, either there must be very little of it, or his whole nature must be frost-bound. But, on the other hand, feeling that is not rooted in intelligent conviction is always in peril. There can be no true growth which is not growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore when we pray

> "Take my life, and let it be
> Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,"

let us also pray—

> "Take my intellect, and use
> Every power as Thou shalt choose."

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Let us take every power He has given us, and twist it like another strand into the rope which binds us to Himself,

> "That all our powers, with all their might,
> In His sole glory may unite."

In what has gone before I have appealed to those who already acknowledge Christ's claims upon their life, to recognize, as part of that claim, His claim upon the intellect. But may it not be that there are some who have never yet acknowledged the larger claim who may be brought to recognize and respond to it through its very reasonableness? I do not mean that a man can be argued into Christianity; but I do mean that if a man will sit down and think, think about himself and his life, what he is making of it, what the issues, the eternal issues, of it are to be; if he will ponder the terrible fact of sin, the sin of the world, the sin of his own heart—how, like a huge tidal wave, it submerges and overwhelms the tiny breakwaters with which man seeks to stay it; and then if from himself he will turn to Christ, and think about the claims of Christ, and the offer of Christ, how those claims have been vindicated,

and that offer made good in the lives of the saints of all ages, and not only so, but so made good that the best men and women whom he has ever known were men and women who had yielded themselves to Christ, and were in all things ruled by Him—if, I say, a man will do this, then it may be the very reasonableness of religion will draw him to its side. And this, also, is part of Christ's appeal to the intellect. "Consider, ye that forget God;" think, think until like the Psalmist you are able to say, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies."

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT RELIGION

"*Of the dark parts of revelation, there are two sorts: one which may be cleared up by the studious application of well-employed talents; the other, which will always reside within the shadow of God's throne, where it would be impiety to intrude.*"—WARBURTON.

VI

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT RELIGION

AMONG the writings of John Foster (an author whose works deserve something better than the general neglect into which of late years they have fallen) is an essay entitled "The Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion," in which the writer seeks to explain "some of the causes by which evangelical religion has been rendered less acceptable to persons of cultivated taste." It is nearly a hundred years since Foster's essay was published, so that his treatment of the question, though marked by his unfailing intellectual vigour and good sense, is now somewhat out of date. But the problem itself is one of perennial interest; it is always with us; to each new generation it presents some new phase, and it is this problem in some of its present-day aspects that I wish now briefly to consider.

Now while we recognize that the problem exists, let us take care that we do not exaggerate its gravity. That many hesitate to believe in

Christ, that some have even ceased to believe in Him, because of the difficulties which Christianity presents to their minds, may be freely admitted. But to assume, as writers like Mrs. Humphry Ward are continually assuming, that orthodox Christianity can give no account of itself to the intellect, that, *e.g.* men only continue to believe in miracles in the same way as children continue to believe in the literal truth of stories like "Jack and the Beanstalk," *i.e.* only so long as they do not think for themselves—to speak thus, I say, is to ignore plain facts of life and history. Assumptions of this kind might be irritating if they were not so manifestly ridiculous. There is no need to weary you with details; but let the roll of the great names of our land be called, and then let those from among them who have held and still hold the truth as it is in Jesus stand forth, and I tell you that in that day the humble believer in Jesus shall not be put to shame.

Nevertheless, the problem does exist. There are difficulties which do not so much as touch the lives of many, which press with their whole weight against others, whose type and temperament and training are of a wholly different order, whose lives move on a wholly different intellectual plane. It is these and such as these that I desire now to keep specially in view. Speaking generally, I believe it is best for a preacher of the gospel to be content to preach the gospel, and leave the truth to do its own work as the natural solvent of

the difficulties which men may feel. Occasionally, however, it may be well to pause to consider the difficulties themselves. Such is our present task.

I

And at the outset let us remind ourselves once more that doubt, if it is honest doubt, is nothing to be ashamed of. A man ought not to chide himself, and still less ought others to chide him, because as yet he is not able to attain to a complete and full-orbed faith. Doubt is nothing to be ashamed of, I say, if it is honest doubt. And the proviso is by no means an unnecessary one; for all doubt is not honest. The shallow youth who wanted to be an agnostic but could never remember the word may be only a legendary figure, but he is a worthy representative of the brainless scepticism which some men to-day so lightly affect. Some are proud of their doubts; they do not want to get rid of them. "He fought his doubts and gathered strength," Tennyson says of his hero; but *they* "fight their doubts"! Never; rather they will use them to fight other people. They embalm them as industriously as the Egyptians of old embalmed their dead. They will bring them for show with all the gleeful self-satisfaction with which a collector of butterflies will show you his collection; and if, some day, they are able to add a new one to the list, they are proud as your entomologist when he has

succeeded in capturing some new specimen for his little museum. It is useless to argue with men like these; you only waste your breath. What is wanted is rather the rude, strong hand of the satirist who shall shake and scatter the puff-ball of their vain conceit.

And some there are who can sink to an even lower deep than this. They will chatter to you by the hour about the "intellectual difficulties" of religion, when, if they would speak the plain truth, the real difficulty is the moral restraint which Christianity puts about a man's life. I have heard of an Indian army official, whose life was flagrantly, notoriously immoral, who talked in this light and airy fashion to the chaplain of his regiment: "Look at the difficulties," he said, "how can a thinking man accept your creed?" At last the chaplain could restrain himself no longer: "Difficulties?" he retorted, "Yes, I suppose there are; the seventh commandment is plain enough, anyhow." So was the fool answered according to his folly. And for all such there is no other answer even from the lips of God Himself.

But, I repeat, if a man's doubts are honest, he has no need to be ashamed of them. They are the "growing pains" of the mental life. They mark the stages by which almost every healthy active mind must pass on its way to a settled faith. I am told that in one of the large Public Schools of England these symptoms of unrest and

disturbance in the minds of some of the older and more serious-minded of the scholars are now so thoroughly understood that the masters playfully speak of the trouble as "the measles," because they know that this kind of intellectual unsettleness is as sure, sooner or later, to overtake their pupils, as every mother supposes the familiar physical ailment is to befall her child.

"Doubt," some one has finely said, "is faith in the making." It is the sign of life, of movement; it may be of movement, irregular and uncontrolled, but anything is better than the stillness and stagnation of death. It is the mark of an awakening mind; and, remember, religion never fears that. What religion does fear, what is religion's greatest foe, is the sleep of indifference —the indifference that knows not and cares not, and will not think enough even to be sceptical. Therefore, once again I say, do not fear because you doubt.

II

Turning now to some of the difficulties of which such doubt is often born, it may be convenient to adopt a simple threefold classification. (1) There are some difficulties which are inevitable, and which we ought to expect. Consider for a moment what is the subject-matter of religion: God and man. Think what God is; think what man is; and then ask yourself, Is it any marvel, if when He, being what He is, speak

to me, being what I am, concerning Himself and myself, that I am not able to comprehend all that He saith? Would not the marvel rather be if it were otherwise? Did you ever try to explain to a little child the truth concerning some matter far too big for its tiny grasp? Then I think you will be able to understand—I say it with all reverence—God's difficulty, when He whose ways and whose thoughts are above ours as the heavens are above the earth, seeks to make plain to us His truth. Difficulties in religion a reason for rejecting it? I would rather say that the Christian religion could not be the true religion if it were not sometimes, and for some, a difficult religion.

Every one, I suppose, must have felt at some time or other the difficulty of harmonizing completely the fourfold narrative of the Gospels. Now this is an exact illustration of difficulties which are inevitable, inherent in the very form in which the Divine revelation has come to us. Christianity is a historical religion; that is to say, it sets before us not only certain great laws and principles, but also certain great facts and events, and upon these it rests. But now, as has been pointed out, the moment a religion becomes a historical religion it takes upon itself all the difficulties of history, and how exceedingly curious and perplexing these sometimes are every one who has read twenty pages of history knows full well. There can be no doubt, for example, that on the 18th of June, 1815, there was fought the

great battle of Waterloo. Yet, though there were some 150,000 present on the field of combat, the exact hour at which the battle began was for long a disputed point among military historians. "The Duke of Wellington puts it at ten o'clock, General Alava says half-past eleven, Napoleon and Drouet say twelve o'clock, and Ney one o'clock." Now, what would you think of my logic, or my common-sense, if, basing my argument on little discrepancies of this kind, I were forthwith to proceed to argue, "Therefore the battle of Waterloo was never fought at all"? And yet this is precisely how men have dealt with the Four Gospels. They have taken, *e.g.* the various accounts which we possess of our Lord's appearances to His disciples and others, after His resurrection from the dead, and because they have been unable to piece these together so as to form one perfect, chronological whole, they have gone on to discredit the whole narrative and to deny that Christ did rise again. Indeed, Archbishop Whately once undertook to show that, on the same principles by which some writers have endeavoured to invalidate the historical trustworthiness of the Four Gospels, a very good case could be made out for believing that even Napoleon Buonaparte himself, the most conspicuous figure in the early years of the nineteenth century, as a matter of fact never existed at all!

Therefore I say—to sum up and to repeat—Christianity being what it is, coming to us in the

form in which it has pleased God that it should come to us, none but the most unreasonable would expect to find it free from difficulties of every sort.

(2) Other difficulties there are—and these I put into the second class—which we ought to be able to deal with, and to set upon one side ourselves. They have arisen in many and very different ways :—

(*a*) We ourselves, it may be, are naturally of delicate, refined susceptibilities. Coarseness and vulgarity we shrink from, as we shrink from a blow. And it may have been our misfortune to have had religion presented to us by persons of an exactly opposite temperament ; so that when we were willing to be won, we were rather repelled. It may have been some sensation-monger in the pulpit, dealing out the wares of salvation in the fashion of a cheap-jack ; or it may have been some earnest but coarse-fingered disciple, who tossed sacred subjects hither and thither, with as little reverence as a man might handle a sack of potatoes. And so, because religion came to us without any kind of commendation from those who first presented it to us, we turned away from it, and would have none of it. We would not touch the precious wine of truth, because of the coarse earthenware vessel that held it.

(*b*) Or, it may be, we have been led to believe that Christianity stands or falls with some particular theory or doctrine, which (whatever it may

be to others) is to us incredible, unthinkable even. Thus, *e.g.*, there have been "explanations" of the great fact of the Atonement which explain nothing to us, but rather make the darkness deeper; there have been doctrines of future torment against which our moral sense utterly revolts; and yet we have been told both were essential to the true faith of a Christian. I have, among my books, a volume written by a very clever man, which is one long and bitter attack upon Christianity, and which rests throughout upon a series of gigantic misapprehensions of that kind. When the writer had finished his book and put down his pen, he flattered himself, I doubt not, that he had overturned Christianity. Well, he had overturned something, but assuredly it was not Christianity; rather it was a kind of straw man, which he, with two or three others to help him, had diligently stuffed, and then labelled with the Christian name. But of the Christianity of Christ and of the New Testament he seems never to have had so much as a glimpse. And, of course, religion will always present difficulties to the man who will not take the trouble to understand it.

(*c*) Or, again, it may be, we are in difficulties about religion, because, while we have intelligence enough to feel the force of hostile criticisms of our faith, we have never used that same intelligence to learn the strength of the granite foundations on which that faith rests. Concerning all other matters that interest us, we are unsatisfied until

we can be clear, logical, definite—able to give to all that ask a reason for the faith we hold. It is only in religion that we are content to be vague, and misty, and uncertain. And one day we paid the penalty. It was only a book that some one lent us, or a magazine article, or a chance word dropped by a friend, but it was enough; our house was built upon the sand, and at the first touch of reality it fell like a house of cards; and from that day to this we have known scarce an hour's peace in thinking about religion.

These are examples, taken almost at random, of a class of religious difficulties, the remedy for which lies in our own hands; for, to speak plainly, they spring from ignorance, ignorance of what Christianity is, ignorance of what Christ and His Apostles really taught; and it is by knowledge, the knowledge of these things, that they must be cast out. Men speak sometimes as if all our intellectual troubles in religion begin when we begin to think for ourselves. There is a grain of truth in that, but there is a bushel in this: that if we would think more, many of our difficulties would come to an end. They spring from too little thought; and the cure for them is more thought. "Now these [of Beræa]," we read, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed." Do you mark that "therefore"? They "ex-

amined," *therefore* they believed. And I say to you that if, instead of accepting as true every miserable travesty of our faith which ignorance or unbelief sets before us, we will search for ourselves whether these things be so, we, too, like the Beræans of old, shall win our way to a wise and rational faith—we shall find our doubts to vanish like evil dreams when one awaketh.

(3) A third and final set of difficulties still remains to be spoken of: I mean those which rise from what (for lack of a better term) I may call the scientific spirit of our time. Over and above the unsettlement consequent upon the restatement and readjustment of Christian doctrine which modern science has rendered necessary, the general habits of mind, the whole intellectual temper produced by that widespread diffusion of scientific knowledge, which is itself one of the most remarkable features of the intellectual life of our country during the last fifty years, have made increasingly difficult for many faith in what we call the "supernatural." We have come, often without realizing it, to demand in religion the same methods of proof, the same kind of certainty, that we have grown accustomed to in science; and when these are not to be had, we think our doubt is justified. Every one has heard, *e.g.*, of Professor Tyndall's famous "prayer test." "You believe in prayer," such in substance was the Professor's challenge to the religious world; "I don't. Let us put the matter to the test." And

he went on to suggest that a number of patients in a hospital should be separated from the rest, and should be made the subjects of special intercessory prayer, their treatment, meanwhile, remaining the same as usual. Then, said the Professor, we will see who gets well first, the patients who are prayed for, or the patients for whom nobody prays. And the good man thought he could experiment with prayer as he might have experimented with some new cure for cancer or consumption! And there are not a few to-day who, though they have never been through Professor Tyndall's scientific "drill," are nevertheless tainted with the same spirit. "Seeing is believing," they say; and where they cannot "see," they think they are justified in refusing to believe. "Prove to us," they will say to you with brave logical show, "Prove to us that there is a God; prove to us that there is a conscious life beyond the grave, and we will believe"; until you almost feel as if you were expected to take your pencil and paper, and work it all out like a mathematical proposition, down to the triumphant Q.E.D. at the bottom.

But surely, if there is one error from which modern science itself ought to have saved us, it is the error of supposing that the non-apparent, that of which our five senses can tell us nothing, is therefore the non-existent. Sir John Lubbock tells us that when the vibrations of air-producing sound read 40,000 a second, they become in-

audible to us; and the 40,000 must grow to 400 millions of millions before, as they strike the retina, they produce the sensation of red. But now, obviously, between these two so widely separated limits, any number of sensations may exist, of which we know nothing, because we have no sense-organ capable of receiving them. And yet it is man, thus bounded and limited, who dares to make himself the measure of all that is! We are like dwellers in a blind tower, pierced by five tiny lancet windows, which we call the five senses; and some of us are so foolish and ignorant, that we think God's great outside universe can be no bigger than just that bit of it which we can see through our little lancet windows.

Ay, and though thy glance be never so keen, "canst thou by searching find out God?" Mere cleverness can never climb the heavens and bring God down. The astronomer sweeps the sky with his telescope and says, "No God! No God!" Well, but what if you want a different instrument to find out God? The mighty brain, the wonderful method, the all-powerful instrument that seems to be able to wrest their secrets from the furthest heavens, they are no use here. Spiritual things are "spiritually discerned"; he that willeth to do the will of God—he shall know; the pure in heart see. And so it may come to pass, as was spoken by the Master, that the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes, and the humblest saint upon his

knees can see further than the scientist on tiptoe.

III

The difficulties of belief—but what about the difficulties of unbelief? The choice does not lie between a rough road and a smooth one, a tangled thicket and a level greensward. A man may give up religion, and imagine that thereby he is going to escape all his intellectual puzzles, that henceforth life for him is to be pleasant sailing in quiet waters; but if he be an honest man, he will soon discover that, instead of being at the end, he is only at the beginning of his difficulties. For, whatever he may think of Christianity, and whatever may be his relation towards it, there are certain facts which remain, and have in some way or other to be explained. The Bible—what it is, how it came to be what it is, and to do what it has done; Christ—His place in man's life, His kingship over man's heart; the Church of Christ—the love, the service, the devotion of the generations that have sheltered within its fold—these are facts, facts that have no parallel in human history, and facts that, I repeat, must be explained. We may reject one explanation, the Christian; we have still to find another—*and a truer.* Hard to believe? Yes, it may be, but it is harder, far harder, to disbelieve.

And if many things are dark and uncertain, many things are clear and certain, and we can

begin there. Sin—I did not need to read the Bible to learn of that; I have only to shut my eyes, and read my own heart, and I know more than enough. The consequences of sin—the smarting memory, the seared conscience, the weakened will: who does not know these things? And the offer of Christ to save us from our sin, and the consequences of our sin—thank God that is real, too. Do we hesitate? Then let us hear the sixty generations of saints, who tell us, as with one voice, that what Christ promises He is able to perform. Why not put Him to the test? Your difficulties—what shall you do with them? Bring them along with you, and I promise you—I speak of what I know—they shall never look so small, or seem so insignificant, as when you try to read them over again in the light that falls from His pure presence. Pray; do not wait till reason says you may—"the heart has reasons that the reason knows not of"—pray, and as you pray, God shall grant you the peace of deliverance.

"I have a life with Christ to live,
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?

"I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die;
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?

"Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet,
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet;
'Come unto Me, and rest;
Believe Me, and be blest.'"

Young men, whatever else is dark, it must be right to follow Christ.

WHAT SOME MEN MAKE OF RELIGION

"If we would learn what St. Paul held to be the essence of the Gospel, we must ask ourselves what is the significance of such phrases as, 'I desire you in the heart of Jesus Christ,' 'To me to live is Christ,' 'That I may know the power of Christ's resurrection,' 'I have all strength in Christ that giveth me power.' Though the Gospel is capable of doctrinal exposition, though it is eminently fertile in moral results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system nor an ethical code, but a Person and a Life."—BISHOP LIGHTFOOT.

VII

WHAT SOME MEN MAKE OF RELIGION

IN Robert Louis Stevenson's well-known essay on Robert Burns, there is this striking and suggestive saying: "Burns," says Stevenson, "was not devoted to religion, but haunted by it." With the truth of this as a criticism of our great Scottish poet, I have just now nothing to do; but as a description of the relation in which multitudes to-day stand to religion, it appears to me to be well-nigh perfect. There are some—like General Gordon, *e.g.*—to whom their religion is the greatest thing in life; it gives form and colour to all they think and do and say, it is about them like an atmosphere, in it they live and move and have their being, it is for them the one great reality in a world of shadows. And, on the other hand, separated from these by a whole diameter, there are those to whom religion is nothing. They have looked upon it only to turn away, it may be in sadness, it may be in scorn. Or, perchance,

the god of this world has so blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that religion makes to them no appeal, wakens within them no responsive echo. Religion for them does not rank even among the lesser motives of life.

But now, between these two widely separated classes lies a third great middle-class; I mean those whose lives, though not moulded by religion, are yet touched by it. In spite of themselves, perhaps, they have never been able to cut themselves free from it. It exists, so to speak, only in the nooks and crannies of their nature; nevertheless, it is there. A power it can hardly be called, so inconstant, so uncertain, so indeterminate is its influence; nevertheless, it is there, a name, a restraint, a dim, half-forgotten ideal, and therefore not wholly powerless.

Does not this describe, albeit in very blundering fashion, what religion is to many of us? We are not Christians (not, at least in any true and worthy sense of the word—Christians by definite decision and conviction), and yet religion has a hold upon us. We join with them that worship in God's house; we "say our prayers" morning and evening; no one ever heard us make a mock of sacred things; nay, indeed, we have for religion a kind of reverent and awestruck admiration; we have even been known to argue in its defence, and to write essays in its exposition. All this, and very much more than this, we do while yet we remain strangers to the power and

blessedness of the Christian faith. Like Burns, we are not devoted to religion, but haunted by it. It does not rule us, but we cannot get quit of it. It is a presence that will not be put by, and yet it is rather a spectre that haunts our life than an angel to bless it and to redeem it from all evil.

Why is this? There are of course many answers; but one explanation is this: we misunderstand religion, we do not think of it as Christ meant us to think of it, we make of it something other than it really is. And my aim at this moment is to remove, if possible, some of these misconceptions and to help some one to a better understanding of the religion of Jesus Christ. At a meeting of young men in Exeter Hall some few years ago, one of the speakers took these three points as the pegs of his address:—

(1) Religion an experience, not a creed.
(2) Religion an inspiration, not a restraint.
(3) Religion a programme for the present life, not an insurance for the future.

With certain modifications of phraseology, which I will make as I proceed, I do not know that I can do better than boldly adopt this triple definition for my own immediate purpose of exposition and appeal.

I

Religion an experience and not a creed; or, as I should prefer to say, religion is first an experience and afterwards a creed.

There is, perhaps, no commoner or more mischievous misconception of Christianity than that which represents it as seeking to impose upon those who would be its disciples the intolerable burden of a difficult creed. If I rightly interpret the minds of young men who have spoken to me on this matter, they have come to think of the door of the Christian Church as jealously guarded by some high ecclesiastical official robed with authority to refuse admission to all who are not prepared to put their names at the foot of some mysterious theological document, the very meaning of which they do not half understand. Henry Drummond has told us, in one of his books, of an interview he once had with a certain foreign professor. "I used to be concerned about religion," said the professor in substance, "but religion is a great subject. I was very busy; there was little time to settle it for myself. A Protestant, my attention was called to the Roman Catholic religion. It suited my case. And instead of dabbling in religion for myself, I put myself in its hands. Once a year," he concluded, "I go to mass."

"Religion is a great subject; I have no time and no ability to think out its great questions for myself"—that in substance is the excuse of multitudes to-day; and as they are not all prepared, as Drummond's professor was, to be religious by proxy, they solve the difficulty by turning away from religion altogether. Cases of

this kind are probably much more frequent than those who have had little practical experience in religious work may suppose. I remember—and the case is typical of many—waiting at the close of a Sunday evening service to speak with three or four young men who were desirous for an opportunity of conversation about religious matters. We had not been talking many minutes before one of them pulled out his Bible, and, turning to the first chapter of Genesis (it is astonishing how many people stick there!), read something from it and asked me what it meant. I said a word or two by way of explanation. "Thank you," he replied; "and what," he went on reading another verse, "does this mean?" Then I began to see where we were and where we were likely to be. The young fellow's mind was stored with little intellectual puzzles, and he imagined they must all be solved to his complete satisfaction, or religion was not for him. And so, by reason of this unhappy misapprehension, that in order to be a Christian a man must first understand and receive all the truths of Divine revelation and all the facts which constitute its historical framework, many are keeping from themselves God's free gift of salvation in Christ.

And surely it *is* a misunderstanding. A man may eat and benefit by his dinner who never looked inside a cookery-book, and who knows nothing whatever of the physiological processes involved in eating and drinking. He may run

and win a race though he cannot tell the name of a single bone or muscle that the exercise has called into use. And it is not necessary, however desirable on other grounds it may be, that a man should set himself to master even the most elementary text-book on theology before he receives what Christ waits to bestow. It is related of a preacher, once famous for his quaintness in the pulpit, that on one occasion having quoted Paul's words, "Great is the mystery of godliness," and seeking to make plain that whatever theoretical difficulties there might be about religion, these were no sufficient reason why a man should not enjoy the practical good of it, suddenly he seized the glass of water that stood in the pulpit by his side; "Great is the mystery of water," he cried, and launched into a talk about oxygen and hydrogen, the proportions in which they combine to produce water and so forth: "Great is the mystery of water, nevertheless," he added with a merry twinkle, and suiting the action to the word, "nevertheless we'll take a drink!"

How comes the sunlight? As a puzzle in solar physics? No; but to warm and cheer and gladden our lives. And God Himself comes not to vex our souls with huge conundrums, but with the offer of life to them that are "dead in trespasses and sins." Let us make the life our own, the science of the life we can discuss afterwards at our leisure. Nor is there in this any deprecia-

tion, implicit or otherwise, of the value of creeds and doctrinal statements. But let any one read the New Testament, and especially the story of the first disciples and the early Christian Church, and then say if this is not always the order: first, the new life, the experience, then the creed; first, the facts, then the explanation, the philosophy of the facts. Let us take care that we keep to God's order. Do not put ABC where He puts XYZ. Begin where He begins; then all will be well. The Gospel, I repeat, is not a set of opinions on a number of more or less difficult questions, on which you also are asked your opinion. It is God's remedy for man's deepest, direst, sorest need. *Have you felt the need?* If you have, go to Him for the remedy. The rest can wait.

II

Religion an Inspiration, not a Restraint.—Speaking of the sudden change in the early religious opinions of George Eliot, Mr. R. H. Hutton says that to him the remarkable point is that George Eliot felt herself relieved of a burden rather than robbed of a great spiritual mainstay by the change. And is it not thus that many have come to think of religion? To them it is a kill-joy, a skeleton at the feast of life, a nagging monitor at one's elbow, a kind of incarnate "Don't." Its chief business, they think, is to tell

men and women what they must not do. To be religious is, in their eyes, to give up this, that, or the other; it is to limit and narrow yourself, to hack and hew until the wide-spreading, full-branched tree of your life is cut down to a bare stump. Our religious ideals, they say, are lean and starved; they lack fulness, breadth, and variety. And religious people are of all men most to be pitied, for they dare not do the things they would, the things they ought to be free to do.

So it is said. But now I ask you to tell me, with the New Testament in your hand, if this is not a miserable travesty of religion. True religion makes a man not less of a man but more of a man. It means not the pushing in of the stops and the shutting off of the music, but the drawing out of every stop that the music may swell forth in all its rich and full-voiced harmonies. "I look," says Martin Luther, "for the symbol of my theology, a seal on which I had engraven a cross, with a heart in its centre; the cross is black to indicate the sorrows, even unto death, through which the Christian must pass, but the heart preserves its natural colour, for the Cross does not extinguish nature, it does not kill, but gives life." God, it has been well said, is not by grace going to undo His work by nature; religion intensifies the natural man.

But, it may be asked, is not the New Testament full of the doctrine of self-denial, self-repression? Did not Christ Himself say, "Who-

soever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"? But let us take care that we rightly understand this matter. The New Testament never inculcates self-denial for its own sake, and as an end in itself. "Every branch," said Christ, "that beareth fruit He cleanseth—pruneth—it," why? "that it may bear more fruit." God's aim, in all His dealings with us, is not the impoverishment but the enrichment of our life. And if sometimes He calls us to walk by the strait and narrow way of self-denial, it is only in order that thereby He may lead us forth into a larger life. Indeed, what is this but a great law which runs through all our life? If we are to win the big prizes of life, we must be content to forego the smaller. If, in Bunyan's magnificent allegory, we are to make our own the crown which the angel offers to us, we must turn away from the dust and sticks and straw of the floor. Through all our life the crowned are they who learn to scorn delights and live laborious days. And that which is true on the lower levels of life, is true also on its highest. All Christ's restraints, if we understand them aright, are inspirations. When He says, "Give up," it is because He is about to say "Receive ye." When He bids us empty our hands of life's poor gewgaws that we snatch with such frantic haste, it is that He may fill them with the true riches. It is more life and fuller that we want; it is more life and fuller that He offers. "I came,"

He said, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."

True, the old passions and desires and ambitions die down and vanish away. But they do not leave the soul an empty place; for in their stead there come in troops of new desires, new affections, and new hopes. The Christian life is the life of wide horizons and large outlooks. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report"—Christ claims them all for those who are His. Religion a "giving up"? Yes; it is just such a giving up as you may see every springtime, when the brown withered leaves of the beech hedgerows drop away, because behind, in every twig and branch, there is surging the rich, full life of the spring. Do not say any more that religion is a restraint; it is when we understand aright the most blessed of heaven-sent inspirations.

III

Religion a Programme for the Present Life, not an Insurance for the Future.—I confess frankly that had I been making my own "divisions," instead of borrowing another man's, I should have worded this third point somewhat differently. It is always easy, and just now it is rather popular, to sneer at what we call "other-

worldliness." Nevertheless, "other-worldliness" has a very large place in the New Testament. And further, let me say, though only by way of parenthesis, that nothing is more utterly vain than to suppose that any religion will ever speak with authority to the heart and conscience of man, which has no outlook into the eternal world. Secular gospels may secure the suffrage of the hour, but there can be no lasting home for the soul of man in any faith which is silent about the future, which in the death-hour can only withdraw helpless and dumb.

Nevertheless, there is, underlying the words I have used, an important truth, and one which Christian men and women have not always fully recognized. Christianity is, without doubt, a programme for the present life. And when it does lift our eyes to the future, it is in order that thereby it may reinforce our sense of duty in the life that now is. "Beloved," cries the Apostle John, "now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." And then from these dazzling heights, where our thought fails like a spent bird, John drops at once to plain, practical duty; and his next word is this: "And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." The Apostle would have us pass from the glow and glory of the mount of vision with a new

heart for the tasks of dusty daily life on the plain below. And this is the spirit of the whole Bible. Here and there, as we turn its pages, we catch a glimpse of the gleaming spires of that city, whose builder and maker is God; but, first of all, it is a guide to the way thither. Once and again we descry through the mist the desired haven, where, when the shore is won at last, the tired mariner will be at rest for evermore; but, first of all, it is a chart, marking the rocks, and the reefs, and the sand-banks where the unwary may go astray and be lost.

Yes; we cannot proclaim it too loudly: Christianity is a programme for the present life. The Bible is pre-eminently, though not exclusively, what we call a "practical" book. This is its own witness concerning itself: it "is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." And let him who would make the best, alike for himself and his fellows, of the life that now is, know that the one sure means to that end is to bring himself into fellowship with the purposes of God revealed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I began by telling you what religion was to one man; let me close by reminding you what it has been to another of our own generation. One memorable month, two or three years ago,[1] our

[1] Written in 1900.

whole nation seemed to have gathered, breathless and expectant, in one sick-room, where the brightest and busiest life of the century ebbed slowly away. And some of us, so long as we remember anything, will never forget the quiet thrill of thankfulness with which we watched the soul of the dying statesman stay itself, in death as in life, on the old faith, uttered in the old words,

> "Jesus, pro me perforatus
> Condar intra tuum latus."

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee."

O young men, you who are beginning the building of the house of your life, build on that rock; and in the day when the floods are out, when the rains descend, and the winds blow, your house shall stand secure, because it is founded upon the rock.

THE MORALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS

"*I cannot away, saith the Lord, with wickedness and worship.*"
—GEORGE ADAM SMITH'S TRANSLATION OF ISAIAH i. 13.

"*I suspect that, after all, there is only one heresy, and that is Antinomianism.*"—JOHN DUNCAN'S "COLLOQUIA PERIPATETICA."

"*There is no strange self-deceit more deeply and obstinately fixed in men's hearts than this: that those whom God favours may take liberties that others may not; that religious men may venture more safely to transgress than others; that good men may allow themselves to do wrong things. There is no more certain fact in the range of human experience than that with strong and earnest religious feeling there may be a feeble and imperfect hold on the moral law, often a very loose sense of justice, truth, purity.*"—DEAN CHURCH.

VIII

THE MORALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS

"ONE great defect of what we call the Evangelical Revival consists in its failure to afford to those whom it has restored to God a lofty ideal of practical righteousness, and a healthy, vigorous, moral training. The result is lamentable. Many Evangelical Christians have the poorest, meanest, narrowest conceptions of moral duty, and are almost destitute of moral strength. If this defect is to be remedied we Evangelicals must think more about Christian ethics."[1] These are strong words; but they are the deliberate judgment of one who was himself a prince among evangelical teachers and preachers, and they may well serve to set us thinking on the important question which is the subject of this chapter.

I

And, at the outset, let me remind you that Christianity is, in the long run, simply a method

[1] Dr. Dale.

of goodness, God's way of making good men. Of course, in saying this I am not saying all that Christianity is. Christianity is a revelation of truth, truth concerning God, truth concerning man, truth concerning the future; and these various truths have need to be stated in terms of the intellect, and to be set in their due relation the one to the other. So that in saying that Christianity is simply a method of goodness we are not in any way taking sides with those foolish and ignorant persons who affect the depreciation of doctrines and creeds. A generation that has learned the value of accurately drawn and carefully grouped statements of science ought to know better than to fling its cheap and idle sneers at what is called Systematic Theology. For Theology is only the attempt of the student of the Scriptures to do for the facts of Revelation what every one insists the geologist and the astronomer shall do for the facts of Nature. But (and this is what is really meant by saying that Christianity is simply a method of goodness) all Christian truth is in order to Christian life; doctrine leads by a straight path to practice. Knowledge here is never an end in itself, but only a means to an end. It is given not for its own sake merely, that we may know, but in order that, knowing, we may do. So that if we do, with perfect accuracy, speak of Christianity as a revelation of truth, let us remember that it is so only in order that thereby it may

become a method of goodness; for to make men good, rather than to teach men truth, must always be its great and final purpose.

One other preliminary explanation let me make. Christianity is a method of goodness—but that does not mean that when a man takes upon himself the profession of Christian discipleship, and joins the Christian Church, he is thereby boasting of his own goodness or loudly thanking God that he is not as other men. There seems to be considerable misunderstanding about this matter. Men are continually excusing themselves from joining the Church of Christ, because, they say, they dare not assert such a claim to personal righteousness as seems to them to be involved in taking that step. The hesitation may not be unworthy, none the less it springs from a misapprehension. If I can interpret the mind of others by my own mind, joining the Church of Christ is no proud profession of strength; it is rather a humble acknowledgment of weakness. It does not mean, "See how good a man I am, how much better than these miserable sinners that are without"; rather does it mean, "I know, I have found out, how bad, how weak, and how sinful I am; and I come to Christ, and I come to Christ's people, that He and they may help me that I may live a better and a holier life." But mark, and this is the one point that I wish just now to emphasize, that is what these things—our Church-going and our Church membership—are

doing for us, if they are not wholly missing their end. We are not boasting when we make use of them, but God and man alike will condemn us if we do not profit by them. To join the Church from a desire to lead a better life, and then to rest content with that, is to make of our Church membership a mockery and a sham. Therefore I come back to the point from which I started, and I repeat, Christianity in the long run is simply a method of goodness, and the value of our profession of it is just exactly the degree in which it is leading us, not only to know and to desire, but to do the will of our Father which is in Heaven.

II

Christianity a method of goodness—no more obvious truism could fall from the lips of a Christian teacher. Yet is there anything more distressing in the whole history of Christendom, ancient and modern, than the fashion in which this simple axiom of religion has been, and still is, ignored and set at nought? The littlenesses of the great, the follies of the wise, the sins of the good, the inconsistencies of them that call themselves Christians, ah me! it is enough to make the angels weep.

Some people seem to think it is all the fault of the pulpit. "He is a contemptible cur," breaks out some one in one of Mark Rutherford's books, "and yet it is not his fault. He has heard ser-

mons about all sorts of supernatural subjects for thirty years, and he has never once been warned against meanness, so, of course, he supposes that supernatural subjects are everything, and meanness is nothing." I am not sure that the peril in some quarters just now is not rather lest we come to think that supernatural subjects are nothing and that sermons against meanness and the like are all that are needed to bring in the millennium. Believe me, that will not last long; for if men cease to believe in the supernatural they will find it difficult to discover a reason why they should preach at all, and then the sermons against meanness and the sermons on supernatural subjects will vanish into air together. Nevertheless, it may be granted that the pulpit has often been to blame, and that there have been times when the Church, though she has spoken with no uncertain sound concerning the great doctrinal verities of our faith, has been strangely silent concerning many of the moral precepts and principles of the Word of God.

But the pew cannot escape its full share of responsibility. Is it not a fact that if some Sabbath day the man in the pulpit speaks a plain, straight word concerning one of the cardinal virtues, truthfulness or honesty, when the service is over, some one will shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, that is all very well; but that isn't preaching the Gospel." One is tempted to wonder what kind of comment people of this sort would make if, somehow or other, we could make it possible

for them to hear the Sermon on the Mount for the first time. They would probably find it a little "unspiritual." I remember receiving, one Monday evening, a letter from some one who had been present in the church in which, on the previous day, I had conducted public worship. My correspondent told me that he had come to the service, "hoping to hear the Gospel preached." "But," said he, "I was much disappointed. I thought you missed a splendid opportunity of telling to a large concourse of people the way of salvation which, as a minister of the Gospel, you are commissioned to do." What actually had happened? I had read that section of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians in which he gives counsel to wives and to husbands, to children and to parents, to servants and to masters, and then, with the Apostle's words as my text, I had preached a sermon on Family Life and Family Religion, because it seemed to me that, if the Apostle thought it worth while to give up a third of a chapter in one short letter to writing about these things, it could hardly be a mistake to ask a Christian congregation on a Sunday morning to spend half an hour in thinking about what he had written. And this was what came of it: I was told that I was not preaching the Gospel. I do not question for a moment the sincerity and excellence of my correspondent's motive: but I do not hesitate to say, with all the emphasis I can command, that this idea, that what we call "the Gospel" has

nothing to do with moral duty, is one of the most pestilential heresies that ever cursed and blighted the Church.

This unhappy divorce of two things that God has joined together, and that man ought never to put asunder—I mean, Religion and Morality—has been brought about in several ways. It is due, in part, to the perversion of Evangelical Christianity itself. Just because salvation is by faith and not by works, because it is wholly of the grace of God and nothing of the merit of man, because, as the beautiful Communion service of the Anglican Church puts it, God forgiveth us, "not weighing our merits but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord"; "therefore," wicked men have argued, "let us continue in sin that grace may abound." From the days of St. Paul until now that evil spirit of Antinomianism (as our forefathers used to call it), the spirit that makes light of the law of God, has haunted, like a dark shadow, the Church of Christ. Every one who has read anything of the early history of our Methodist Church knows how, in the last century, John Wesley had to grapple and wrestle with that spirit of evil. "Absolute, avowed enemies of the law of God," he called the Antinomians of his day. "With them 'preaching the law' was an abomination. They had 'nothing to do' with the law. They would 'preach Christ,' as they called it, but without one word of holiness or of good works." Perhaps the Church of Christ

never had a teacher who, with more patience and more simplicity, sought to make plain to all men God's way of salvation than did John Wesley, but doctrines of this kind he denounced, and justly denounced, as doctrines of the devil.

Another explanation of the lamentable severance of morality from religion lies perhaps in the strange tenacity with which men have always clung to the idea that a certain moral laxity can be atoned for by special and peculiar devotion to the observances of religion. Let me illustrate:—

An employer of labour neglects his workmen, and suffers them to be wronged. He does not mean to be unjust, but the necessary oversight is distasteful to him. He would rather give five hours to philanthropical and religious committees than one to his factory or labour yard, and every "good cause" finds in him a generous friend. Then, when the bill for the neglected workmen comes in, he remembers his committees and his charities, and writes "paid" at the foot of the account.

A workman scamps his work, and wastes his master's time, but at the end of the week pockets his master's wages; and if, sometimes, the thought of the scamped work or the wasted hours makes him wince, he remembers that for years he has been a regular church-goer, and has never been behind with his pew rents; and with that sop he keeps conscience quiet.

A member of my Church once told me that, in

his youth, he was in the employ of a plumber, who was an elder in a Presbyterian Church, but who habitually evaded the terms of his contracts. He would undertake to supply work of a given character, and then would send in work of an inferior sort. And, again, I suppose, if the thought of the dishonest plumbing work troubled him, by a kind of unconscious mental arithmetic, he set over against it the time and the money that he had spent in the discharge of the duties of his eldership.

There is a story told in George Eliot's Life of a woman (I am sorry to say she was a Methodist), against whom was brought a charge of lying. When the accusation against her was proved so that there was no possibility of escaping from it, all that she had to say by way of self-excuse was that she did not feel that she had greatly grieved the Holy Spirit! I say she was a Methodist; presumably she "met in class," and perhaps paid her contributions with regularity, and I suppose she thought that the Holy Spirit would have regard to these things, and would not be greatly grieved though she had told a lie.

And so, all the world over, men are using their religion as a make-weight for moral shortcomings, and are busy seeking or inventing substitutes for that for which no substitute can ever be found, the doing of the will of God.

III

I am only a clumsy physician, and my diagnosis of the evil to which I am referring may be very imperfect, but every one knows the mischief it is doing every day of the week and every week of the year, both in the Church and out of it. We Christian men and women often come together in our conferences and conventions and the like, to discuss what we sometimes call "the state of the work of God" among us. Why, we ask ourselves, with genuine earnestness and great heart-searchings, does not the Gospel make greater headway? Why does not Christ's kingdom come? Why drive His chariot-wheels so heavily? One thinks it is the spread of infidel literature among the working-classes that is hindering us; another puts everything down to the growth of sacramentarianism and sacerdotalism; one blames the football field and another the public-house, while somebody gravely suggests that it is the "higher critics" who are the cause of all our difficulties. Well, there may be some certain dregs of truth in all these explanations. But suppose we could go to-morrow morning to the factories and dockyards and workshops of our land, where five out of six of its bread-winners are at work, and could ask them why so many of them were not in any place of worship last Sunday, what do you think they would tell us? Here and there we might find a

man whose mind had been disturbed by something he had read; here and there another who had been caught in the mesh of our modern sacramentarianism; but, for the most part, we should hear little about "higher critics," or infidel literature, or Romanizing priests. If we could get them to talk it would not be of these they would speak, but of the Methodist woman who goes to class and tells lies, and the Presbyterian plumber who does bad plumbing work, and Mr. Somebody-or-other who fills to the brim the coffers of this and that charitable and religious institution, and grinds the faces of the poor—these are the things we should hear about.

I was present once at a large working-men's conference, called to discuss this very problem: "Why don't working men go to church?" All the speaking was done by the men themselves; and will you believe me when I say that the gist of five-sixths of what was said that Sunday afternoon was this: "We don't go to church because we don't see that you who do are any better than we who don't"? Much that was said was harsh and bitter, unjust and untrue; but I learned that day, as I had never learned before, that it is the yawning gulf between what we say and what we are, that, more than all else besides, keeps men back to-day from the Master's feet.

Read again the story of the early Christian Church, as it is written in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. See how, again and

again, the blood-red hand of the persecutor was uplifted to smite and slay the infant Church in its cradle; and yet, despite all that Annas and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and the whole might of the Sanhedrim could do, "the more mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed." And the first blow that was struck at the Church that hurt it was struck by a hand that should have been the hand of a friend, when Ananias and Sapphira, from within the Church, sought to turn it to their own base and selfish ends. It is a saying in literary circles that no man is ever written down except by himself; and the only foes who have, or have ever had, power against the Church to hurt her are the traitors within her, who stab her in secret, and hide the devilry of their doing amid the plentiful folds of the cloak of profession.

We need, as Dr. Dale was never weary of telling us, an Ethical Revival within the Church. Every one knows the evils which befell Europe in the days before Luther came, the snares into which England stumbled in the days before Wesley and Whitefield came, the darkness which lay over Scotland in the days before Chalmers came, when the lamp of truth was hidden under the bushel of error, and ignorant men by their ignorant counsel darkened the way of salvation; but, our peril is not one whit less grave or one whit less menacing, if we neglect the great moral revelation which in His Word God has

given to His Church. We must strive for such an elevation in the tone of the morality of the religious that—if I may put it in simple, concrete form—the Methodist woman must either give up her lies or her class, and the Presbyterian plumber must either do honest plumbing work or resign his eldership; and as for the master who neglects his workmen, and the workman who neglects his work, we must make the Church so hot for them that they will either mend their ways or quit it. We who say we love the Lord must hate all evil.

And when we seek to do this we shall but be bringing ourselves into line with every word that is written in the Book that we used to call "The religion of Protestants." Read the Old Testament; every page of the book burns and throbs with the passion for righteousness: "I, the Lord, hate evil"; the righteous God—it is the burden of the cry of prophet after prophet—must have a righteous people; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. And if from the Old we turn to the New Testament, the witness of the Word is even more unmistakable. Can it be that some Christian people keep private "revised versions" of the Scriptures of their own, in which they have pasted little slips of blank white paper over some of the inconvenient texts? Faith without works, says James, is "dead"; which, being interpreted, means this, that "if any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain,"

nothing, counts for nothing. John, too, the man we thought all tears and tenderness, John can knit his brows and be as stern as James himself, when he thinks about this matter; "he that doeth not righteousness," he says, "is not of God." And Paul, the Apostle of Faith, he who is pre-eminently the "theologian" of the New Testament—he, more than they all, bids us walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work. And if, past all the Apostles, we go into His presence from whose words there can be no appeal, we shall hear Him say that the day cometh when His great throne shall be set up, and when, from the midst of it, He Himself will say even unto some who have prophesied in His name, and in His name have done many wonderful works, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Listen to the testimony of the whole Book, and it will seem sometimes as if all the prophets were one prophet, and all the psalmists one psalmist, and all the apostles one apostle; and then as if prophet and psalmist and apostle spake with but one voice, and with that voice uttered but one word, and that word this: "If a man say he love God, and hate not evil, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him."

IV

One other word I dare not leave unsaid, for I know all too well the use that some are always

ready to make of ugly facts like those I have mentioned. There are on the fringe of all our Churches to-day men and women who lay hold of incidents like these of the Methodist woman and the Presbyterian plumber, and then turn on us to rend us with their sneering interrogations. "Didn't we tell you so? There's your religion! That's Christianity! Why should we have anything to do with it?" And if that is our religion, if that is Christianity, they are right; there is no reason why they should have anything to do with it. If Christianity is not a method of goodness, if by its means bad men are not being made good, and good men better, all the apologetics in the world will not keep it alive. But no man needs a preacher to tell him that that is not our religion, that that is not Christianity. How many times must it be said: it is with what is written here, in the Word of God and the life of Christ, written too in great, round letters which he that runs may read—it is with that, and not with the crabbed and crooked lettering of the lives of imperfect men, that we have to do.

And if we must have regard to the lives of Christ's disciples, can we find none but these that tell of shameful weakness and disgrace? The author of *Ecce Homo* says: "There has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made

the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself." You know how true that is, how infinitely less than the truth it is. Think for a moment, and you can remember men —perhaps your own father was one of them— brave and honest and pure and true. They could die but they could not lie. Like Arthur's knights, they reverenced their conscience as their king; they spake no slander, no, nor listened to it— men in whose presence impurity hid its brazen face abashed, and the foul words died away, unspoken, on the tongue. Ay, and women too— perhaps your own mother was one of them—they lived but commonplace lives, filled with commonplace cares; but every day they walked with God and were transfigured; and when you saw them you thanked God that all His angels were not in heaven. And all these were what they were because He dwelt in them and they in Him; because every day they bowed saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" These are "God's workmanship"; this is what He can do for every life that will commit itself wholly into His hands.

THE WITNESS OF HEREDITY TO FAITH

"How strange it seems that physical science should ever have been thought adverse to religion! The pride of physical science is, indeed, adverse—like every other pride—both to religion and truth; but the sincerity of science, so far from being hostile, is the pathmaker among the mountains for the feet of those who publish peace."

JOHN RUSKIN.

IX

THE WITNESS OF HEREDITY TO FAITH

THROUGH the whole realm of living things runs the great law of inheritance. All that lives tends to repeat itself in the life of its offspring. Cattle and creeping thing and beast of the field, "every living creature that moveth," each (according to the language of the first chapter of Genesis) bringeth forth "after its kind." Men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, but, as the old proverb runs, "like begets like." Nor is it a merely general resemblance of organic structure that one generation transmits to another. It is not only the "type" that persists, but individual features, characteristic traits and peculiarities, sometimes of a very minute kind, tend to repeat themselves in successive generations. By what subtle, mysterious processes one life is thus able, as it were, to incarnate itself anew in the life of its offspring no man can tell, but the fact itself is beyond dispute.

The ant, *e.g.*, begins life, not only with the form and structure of its ancestry, but in full possession of those marvellous industrial instincts which to-day have passed into a proverb. The wonderful sagacity of the sheep-dog, which no amount of training could ever confer upon a poodle or fox-terrier, comes to it by way of inheritance as part of its birthright. In like fashion, old habits, curious antipathies still persist where the originating circumstances have long ceased to exist. Thus we are told that "in the menageries, straw that has served as litter in the lions' or the tigers' cage is useless for horses; the smell of it terrifies them, although countless equine generations must have passed since their ancestors had any cause to fear attack from feline foes." When a dog, without any apparent reason, turns itself round and round before settling down on the hearth-rug before the fire, it is probably only doing what some savage and remote ancestor did, long generations ago, when it trampled down the long grass of the forest to make a lair for itself for the night.

And the law, thus roughly illustrated in the case of animals, holds true also when we come to man. When Tennyson tells us how

> "Sometimes in a dead man's face,
> To those that watch it more and more,
> A likeness, hardly seen before,
> Comes out—to some one of his race,"

he is only giving poetic form to a well-known fact

of science. Every one knows how the distinctive type of features that we call "Jewish" reappears in generation after generation. The vagabondism of the gipsy is in his blood; he cannot help himself. It is said that the Austrian Government once tried to form a regiment of gipsies; but nature proved too strong even for military authority: at the first encounter they all ran away. Genius, like gout and colour-blindness, and a hundred other physical and intellectual characteristics, tends to run in families; so that we have the aquiline nose of the Bourbons, the insolent pride of the Guises, the musical genius of the Bachs, the scientific genius of the Darwins. And, on the other hand, every philanthropist and social reformer knows with how deadly a grip hereditary vices like laziness and lust and drunkenness fasten themselves on their unfortunate victims. Along all the lines of his being—physical, mental, moral—man derives from his past.

Indeed, it is unnecessary to labour the argument further, for we are all every day assuming the truth of it. You would not willingly allow a child of yours to be married to the son or daughter of imbecile or consumptive parents, because you know all too well the terrible risk you would incur. Go to an insurance company to take out a policy on your life, and they will ask you questions not only about yourself, but about your family, its liability to special forms of disease, and so forth,

because they know that that family history tends to repeat itself in your life. When a man sits down to write a biography, he begins with the parents, the grandparents, or still more remote ancestors of the subject of his book, because, again, he knows that if we are to understand him of whom he writes, we must first of all understand them from whom he sprang, and who helped to make him the man he was. As Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "This body in which we journey across the isthmus between the two oceans is not a private carriage, but an omnibus"; and it is our ancestors who are our fellow-passengers. Yesterday is at work in to-day; to-day will live again in to-morrow. The lives of all of us are moulded by unseen hands which reach down to us out of the past, and the deeds of the fathers, be they good or be they evil, are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth, or, it may be, the thousandth generation.

Now this doctrine of heredity is, as we say, very much "in the air" at the present moment. We meet with it everywhere. The man on the street is as eager to argue about it as the philosopher. The dramatist, the novelist, the journalist, the educationalist, the moralist, the social reformer, and the theologian have all made the subject their own, and are all ready with their own applications of it in the various provinces of our modern life and thought. With many of these applications I have at this moment nothing to do. They are

very important, but they lie outside the province of the religious teacher. On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the doctrine of heredity, as it is held and taught by many to-day, cuts away the ground from under the feet of religion and morality alike. It is not merely that it conflicts with this or that conclusion of morality; it destroys the very basis of all morality, and makes the name itself to be meaningless. It is not merely that it denies this or that doctrine of the Bible; it makes null and void the truths which the Bible everywhere assumes as the groundwork of all. Especially is this true of some of our modern writers of fiction. Life by them is literally demoralized. There is no room for anything like morality left in it. Thomas Hardy, for example, delightful as many of his books are, yet depicts human life in such a way that you feel as if his peasants and milkmaids were on a level, and, indeed, of a piece, with the cattle they tend. Now, to acquiesce in teaching of this sort, as a criticism or as an interpretation of life, is like consenting to be choked, and it is against all such teaching that our protest to-day needs to be both clear and strong. But before I pass on to speak of the relation of the facts of heredity to moral responsibility—which will be the subject of the succeeding chapter—let me now point out that, while we may and must refuse to accept the extreme conclusions to which some would drive us, there is much in this doctrine which we may not only

admit, but which, indeed, we may gladly welcome as an aid to a fuller and truer understanding of some of the great truths of the Christian Gospel.

Yet at the very outset I may be challenged with the old queries of those to whom heredity has always seemed a stumbling-block in the way of faith. Why are the innocent doomed to suffer for the sins of the guilty? Why do little children, cursed from their mother's womb, "soak and blacken, soul and sense, in city slime"? Is not the white robe of Divine justice stained when thus the sins of the fathers are visited upon their helpless offspring? But this is to argue from one set of the facts only. If some are born to an inheritance of woe, are not others likewise born to an inheritance of good? If some reap only poisonous hemlock, do not others gather wholesome grain? If to one man heredity is as Mount Ebal darkening with its curse, is it not to another as Mount Gerizim, gladdening with its benediction? And the good outweighs the evil. "The evil that men do," says Shakespeare, "lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones." The Bible view is at once truer and more hopeful; for while the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children, "unto the third and the fourth generation," mercy is shown "unto a thousand generations,"[1] "of them that love Me and keep My commandments."

Before we speak of the injustice of the law of

[1] See Exod. xx. 6, marg. R.V.

heredity, let us ask ourselves: what if there were no such law? If no provision were made by which the gains of one generation could be handed on to the next, and so become the permanent possession of the race; if all had to begin at the same point, and fight over again the same battles, where would be our hope of the world's progress? The history of man would be, as one writer has well said, like the old story of Sisyphus, doomed to roll incessantly a huge stone up a mountain, which, as soon as it reached the top, rolled down to the foot again. Let us have regard to *all* the facts, and the law of inheritance will be seen to be both just and good. That man has often turned it to his hurt, and has thereby brought untold misery upon his fellows, is, alas! too true. But do not let us therefore charge God foolishly, as though the responsibility were not ours, but His. Whatever the folly and sin of man, the law remains, a monument of the gracious purpose, the love and wisdom of the Eternal.

The doctrine of heredity, I repeat, then, rightly understood, may serve to illustrate and emphasize some of the great doctrines of the Christian faith, and may show itself one of the many witnesses which in our day Christ is raising up unto Himself.

(1) Mark, *e.g.*, with what unequalled emphasis the teachers of heredity are proclaiming to us the truth of Paul's great saying, that "God hath

made of one every nation of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth," and that therefore "no man liveth unto himself." We are members one of another, so that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. We are not solitary units, but parts of a great social organism, living cells in the tissue of that organism, bound together in the unity of a common life. And this recognition of the *organic* principle in human life, says an eminent theologian, is one of the greatest gains of modern thought for the right understanding of the Christian doctrine both of sin and of redemption. For this, which is the doctrine of science, is likewise also one of the first principles of New Testament truth. "Solidarity" may be a modern word, but it stands for an idea that is as old as the Scriptures; and it is a remarkable fact that when we seek to state it in its most impressive form, it is to their words that we instinctively turn. So that, as Dr. Denney well says, "we need not be afraid to contemplate the laws and facts of heredity in all their extent. They give mystery and immensity to the spiritual life of man, and so far from qualifying his responsibility, they widen its range enormously."

(2) Or take again the question of "original sin," as it is termed. No subject of theological inquiry has been so flouted and ridiculed. Fools have made a mock at it; and men who are not fools have dismissed it as one of "the fantastic inventions of man's diseased conscience and

imagination." It may be admitted that the doctrine has been often grossly misstated, and that its exponents have only themselves to thank for much of the ill-natured criticism it has called forth. But let us take care that no misapprehensions, whether of friends or of foes, hide from us the facts. Listen to this twofold testimony: "Science," says a distinguished Cambridge Professor, "has joined hands with Christianity on the question of original sin, and the once popular doctrine of the soul as a clean white paper is gone for ever." "Men," says another recent writer, speaking from a wholly different standpoint, "are born with their moral natures as deformed or as imperfect as their physical ones. To the doctrine of original sin science has thus given an unexpected support." That is to say, modern science, pursuing its own chosen path, with no reference, direct or indirect, to the doctrines of Christianity, has worked its way round at last to the side of St. Paul, and from the book of Nature reads out to us what already we had read in the book of Revelation: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

(3) But the point I desire most particularly to emphasize is the witness of heredity to Jesus Christ Himself. Two brief quotations will help to make plain my meaning:—

Mr. John Morley, in his Essay on Voltaire, says: "It is not given, we all know, even to the most original and daring of leaders to be without

precursors, and Voltaire's march was prepared for him before he was born, as it is for all mortals."

"The great man," writes Mr. Grant Allen, in his brilliant little volume on Charles Darwin, "springs from an ancestry competent to produce him; he is the final flower and ultimate outcome of converging hereditary forces that culminate at last in the production of his splendid and exceptional personality."

It may be that from the point of view of science itself these statements leave something to be desired; but into that I cannot now enter. Let us take them as they stand, and see whither they will lead us. "It is not given," says Mr. Morley, "even to the most original and daring of leaders, to be without precursors." John Knox, *e.g.*, had his "precursors"; his way was prepared before him by Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, and it might very reasonably be argued that there were forces at work in Scotland that must have brought about the Reformation, even if Knox had never returned from Geneva to put on the top-stone. But where are the "precursors" of Jesus Christ? Who are they who so prepared His way before Him that without their work His could not have been?

"The great man," Grant Allen tells us, "springs from an ancestry competent to produce him." Then where is the ancestry that produced Christ? Where are the "converging hereditary forces" that culminated at last in the production

of His splendid personality? They simply cannot be found, for they do not exist. The mother of Jesus was Mary. A pretty legend says that His eyes were the same colour as hers; undoubtedly His human nature was influenced by hers. But, from Mary to Jesus—how can heredity bridge that gulf? Nor, if we turn to the family of which Christ was a member, and to the home in which He was brought up, and in which for thirty years He lived, are we any nearer the explanation. When, during the years of His public ministry He reappeared among his own countrymen at Nazareth, they put together all they knew of Him. "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?" Yet they were as far off as ever from understanding Him: "Whence, then, hath this man all these things, this wisdom and these mighty works?"

We may go further back still, and we may read Christ's genealogy after the flesh as it is recorded for us in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel; but will any one pretend that here are the "converging hereditary forces" that are presently to culminate in Him? Nay, some of the names in this list are the names of men who sinned grievously and heinously against God and man; and if it is from this human ancestry alone that Christ's descent is to be traced, then we have

to reckon with this startling fact, that He who knew no sin, who was Himself holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, yet sprang from a tainted stock; Job's moral impossibility is enacted before our eyes: a clean thing has come forth out of an unclean. Is it not plain that the more we emphasize the principle of heredity, the more helpless and hopeless become all merely naturalistic explanations of the Person of Christ, and the more triumphant the vindication of the Church's faith through all her history in the Divinity of her Lord?

"If, amid the ancestral pictures which hang upon the walls of some old English manor-house, and which betray the same noble lineage through many generations, the features of some far-off ancestor reappearing, perhaps, in the last portrait hung among those of the dead, we should notice a face unlike all before it, having eyes of southern fire, or beauty of another clime, we should at once conclude that the strange countenance represented some other line of descent; that its presence there could not be explained by the laws of heredity, working through the English blood; and that an altogether new element, at that point, had come into the family line. But in the world's gallery of illustrious persons, we find introduced, in the miniature of the Evangelists, a countenance never seen before on earth. It is neither a Jewish nor a Gentile face; it resembles none before it; it is like itself alone. *From whence did it come into*

the human family?" This is the question to which unbelief can make no answer, the problem for which it can discover no solution. For myself, I accept the word spoken unto Mary by the angel of the Lord: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born of thee shall be called holy, the Son of God," and I am ready to join once more in the Church's great *Te Deum*:—

> "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ;
> Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

HEREDITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

"*Because philosophy and science have been bringing into prominence the influence of heredity and physical environment on character, we use this consideration, and often with little enough knowledge of real science, to obliterate the sense of sin. We are apt to regard sin as it appears in the world at large as a result of ignorance, or social conditions—as in one way or another a form of misfortune. And so viewing it in the world, we view it in ourselves. We make excuses for ourselves. We have largely lost the sense that sin is wilfulness; that it is an inexcusable offence against God; that it does, and necessarily does, bring us under God's indignation; that necessarily, because God is what He is, the consequences of sin in this life, and much more beyond this life, are inconceivably terrible. . . . Only through a restoration of evangelical severity can there be a restoration of evangelical joy.*"—CANON GORE.

X

HEREDITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

I HAVE endeavoured, in the previous chapter, to show how the doctrine of heredity may serve to emphasize some of the great words of the Christian faith. But, as I also pointed out, it may be taught in such a form as, practically, to empty life of all moral significance. Indeed it is (as a moment's reflection will show) around the idea of "accountability" that all the more serious problems arising out of the doctrine naturally group themselves; and it is to the consideration of some of these that I wish us now briefly to address ourselves. Taking for granted the facts of heredity, how do they affect our ideas of moral responsibility? The answer may be given in threefold form: Heredity may *increase*, heredity may *diminish*, heredity can *never destroy* a man's responsibility.

(1) Heredity may *increase* a man's responsibility. This is true if we think of man only as a son, related to and deriving from the past. For if we inherit evil do we not also inherit

good? And if he is to be pitied and to be dealt tenderly with, who, through no fault of his own, enters upon a grievous heritage of woe, is not he to be visited with stern condemnation who, reaping a rich harvest which other hands have sown, wastes his inheritance in riotous living? It is our boast sometimes that we are "the heirs of all the ages"; and as is the good of life which thus unmerited has come to us, so also is our responsibility; for here, as everywhere else, responsibility is but the other half of privilege. But man is not only the child of yesterday, he is the parent of to-morrow; he is not only the centre in which are focussed the rays of the past, he is a new centre whence new influences radiate forth into the future. Heredity, like the old Roman god Janus, looks both ways. If the sins of the fathers, in which we had no share, are visited upon us, so also do the consequences of our deeds fall upon those who come after us; and if by reason of the one fact the bands of responsibility be in any degree slackened, by reason of the other they are strengthened and tightened anew. So that, as Dr. Denney says, in words which I have already quoted, when we take the laws and facts of heredity in all their extent, they give mystery and immensity to the spiritual life of man, they widen enormously the range of his responsibility.

(2) Nevertheless, there are cases where heredity may count as a mitigating factor. It

may be false and mischievous, as Mr. Bagehot has said, to speak of "hereditary vice," but "it is most true and wise to observe the mysterious fact of hereditary temptation." Drunkenness, *e.g.*, is a terrible sin, but sometimes it is also a disease, for which the sufferer himself is not responsible; then, surely, we may mingle pity with our condemnation and leave the rest with God. When Christ declared that in the last great day it should be "more tolerable" for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the Cities of the Plain, He clearly taught us that in the Divine judgment all the facts and conditions of man's moral life are taken into account, that responsibility is proportioned to opportunity. "Each one of us shall give account *of himself* to God"; and if it be, as we sometimes say, that there are some who never "had a chance" in life, then it is of their life without its "chance" that they will give account. If to one heredity has proved a blessing and to another a curse, God will not forget the fact, however man may ignore it. God asks not only to what does a man reach? but, where did he start? He marks not only the victories men win, but the odds in the face of which men fight, the moral effort that is put forth. And many a time where our eyes have seen only the shame and disaster of seeming defeat, the "larger eyes" of God have marked the ceaseless if often thwarted struggle to cast off the yoke and bondage of sin. Therefore, in face of the mystery of our life, which deepens with our

knowledge, this lesson let us learn, that where we cannot know, we may not and we must not judge; and this confidence let us cherish, that the Judge of all the earth will do right where we cannot even see what is right.

(3) Heredity may increase, heredity may diminish, heredity can *never destroy* a man's responsibility. It is here that we join issue with much that is said, and still more that is implied, in our current literature. The doctrine of heredity has so completely taken possession of the minds of some that to them man is nothing more than a bundle of transmitted tendencies, the resultant of antecedent forces, a projectile shot forth from the past whose path might be determined with almost mathematical accuracy, did we but know the exact measure of the hereditary forces working within him. The undoubted facts of heredity are emphasized to the exclusion of all other facts, as though in them, and in them alone, were the key to the whole mystery of the life of man.

Now when men come to think thus, it is obvious they will make short work of all ideas of moral responsibility. Indeed, they tell us plainly that whether we are wise or foolish, whether we are good or evil, depends wholly upon "a combination of circumstances over which we ourselves have no control." It is absurd to talk about men's "sins"; we ought rather to speak of their "diseases." Bad men are not "sinners," they are only invalids. We do not

condemn a man because he has the misfortune to be born a hunchback; why then should we blame him because, like his father before him, he suffers from some villainous crook in the temper? Crime, says Mr. Edward Bellamy, is really a case of "atavism," or the recurrence of an ancestral trait, which, in plain English, means this: that a man is no more responsible for what we call his "sin" than he is responsible for the colour of his hair or the shape of his nose. "The strong nature, the vivid imagination, the tender conscience, the firm will," says one writer of this school, "all come by inheritance, as much as money in the funds, or a noble demesne of broad acres." "There is a destiny made for a man by his ancestors," says another, "and no one can elude the tyranny of his organization."

Most of us have heard, and some of us perhaps have joined in, the strong protestations that, in the name of morality, used to be urged against the old Calvinistic doctrine of the Divine decrees. Indeed, there was a time when every ignoramus thought himself competent to pick a hole in the seamless robe of Calvin's faith. But here is the astonishing fact, that now, when Calvinism is relaxing its hold on the intellectual life of Christendom, some of its least worthy elements are being asserted anew in the name of modern science. For what is this doctrine that man is only a piece of nature, a nut, a screw, a wheel in the vast mechanism of the universe, but (as Dr. Dale used

to say) Calvinism over again, but Calvinism without God? And whatever doubt there be as to the influence on morality of the older creed, there can be none as to the consequences of the later. If sin is to be thought of only as a case of atavism, the recurrence of an ancestral trait, a misfortune to be deplored like an awkward gesture or an unhappy trick of speech, and not as *sin*, demanding the penitence of man and the forgiveness of God, there is an end, at once and for ever, of all religion and morality alike.

It is a remarkable fact that these moral perplexities arising out of the relation of the individual to the sins of the fathers are as old as Ezekiel and the days of the Exile. Two thousand five hundred years ago men felt the pressure of the same facts and put upon them the same sinister interpretation. The exiles in Babylon, conscious that the calamities which had fallen on their nation were due, in large measure, to wrong-doing in which they had not been partakers, suffered themselves to settle down into a kind of despairing fatalism which found expression in the familiar proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. xviii. 2). Our fathers' sins, they said, have fixed our destiny; of what use is it to strive against the inexorable fate that binds us?

The prophet's answer is to be found in the eighteenth chapter of his prophecy. It may be

urged that the answer is incomplete, that it touches one side of the problem only; yet it is adequate for its purpose. Ezekiel, it should be remembered, was not holding an academic dispute on the relation of heredity to moral responsibility; he was dealing with an actual case and dealing with it practically, as a preacher of righteousness. His answer is not meant to be a complete philosophy of responsibility, but to stop the mouths of men who pleaded the sins of their fathers as an excuse for their own wrong-doing, to strike off the shackles of their despair, and to lead them to repentance. The prophet does not deny that the consequences of sin descend from father to son; what he does deny is that they constitute a man's destiny. To that end his whole argument moves, and so interpreted it is, I believe, as valid for us to-day as it was for the exiles in Babylon. The prophet meets the Jewish fatalists with two great truths from the mouth of the Lord.

(1) "Behold, all souls are Mine"; that is to say, every individual soul is related to God. We are related to the past, and on this relation those to whom Ezekiel spoke laid all the emphasis; but we are also related to God. We derive from the past; but that which we derive from the past is not the whole of us; we derive also from God: "As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine." Weighted as we may be by sins which are not our own, we have each of us a moral life, which is our own, derived direct from God.

If, on one side, I am linked with a sinful human ancestry and so rooted in nature, on the other side I stand in a Divine lineage, and am rooted in God. If, as one writer happily puts it, the world, the flesh and the devil held mortgages on my life before the title-deeds were put into my hands, thank God, He also holds a mortgage, and His is greater than theirs. Therefore, to think of ourselves as only so many bundles of transmitted tendencies is to ignore all in us that is greatest, all that makes us most truly ourselves.

(2) The prophet's second word is the natural corollary of his first: "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." That is the charter of spiritual individualism. It is never our past that condemns us. Our past can be our ruin only in so far as we ally ourselves with it and make it our own. We are, as I have said, related to the past; and therefore the facts of heredity cannot be denied, and must not be overlooked. But this is not the whole truth concerning us; if it were, it would be as idle to talk about moral responsibility as writers like Mr. Cotter Morison declare that it is. We are also related to God, and through that relationship the strength and grace of God can come to us. And it is that double fact that constitutes our responsibility; we can

choose, we can take sides. And it is when, consciously and deliberately, we take the evil that is in us to be our portion, or when, shirking the struggle altogether, we leave evil in undisputed possession of the field, it is then, and only then, that we stand condemned before God. "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die."

Such, in brief, was Ezekiel's message to the men of his day. Let us see if we can gather any confirmation of it.

(1) I turn again, first of all, to the Bible, for, assuredly, no book has a better right to be heard. There is no book in all the world that knows me up and down and through and through, that can talk to me about myself, like this book. What, then, saith the Scripture? It is a very tender, gracious, pitiful book. Stern, bleak heights it shows, and black, sunless depths; but even the depths are fringed with sweet flowers, and the heights stand in the warm, soft sunlight. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. . . . He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." There is no book in all the world, "to make allowance for us all," like the Bible; "there is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment given." Yes; but the Bible never mouths and mumbles its words when it talks about sin; it never calls bad men "invalids." In the book sin is always black, horrible, devilish. This hand that

hath done it all the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten; the soul that is stained by it all great Neptune's ocean cannot wash clean again. There must be blood, the blood of the Son of God, before that "damned spot" in the soul of man will "out." That is the speech of the whole book concerning sin.

(2) And even if we pay no heed to the Scriptures at all, there are still a hundred witnesses out of whose mouths the word of Ezekiel may be established. That man is not the victim of fate, that he is free to choose, that he is responsible for his choice—on that basis all our life, our very language, is built up. We speak sometimes of "dissipated" men; why do we never speak of "dissipated" animals? We urge upon ourselves, upon our children, and upon others the duty of cultivating what we call "habits of self-control." But when a man is breaking in a young horse or taming wild animals, how much does he trust to their "self-control"? Does he not know that the only control to which they will submit is *his* control, the control of the rein, and the spur, and the whip? It is, indeed, this self-determining power, the power to turn his life this way or that, which makes man what he is, separate from the beasts of the field. We may prate as we please about "the irresistibility of inherited instincts" and the like, but every time a father sends his child supperless to bed for telling an untruth, every time society sends a man to prison for a theft, our theories are

quietly put on the shelf and forgotten. All our penal institutions bear witness to, and all society is organized on the presumption of, the freedom and responsibility of man.

(3) And if from facts like these, which may be said to voice the universal consciousness, we turn to question our own individual consciousness, the answer is final, absolute, irresistible; I know I am free, I know I can choose, I know I am responsible for my choice. Men may drug their souls with moral sophistries, they may twist and torture the testimony of consciousness as they will, it obstinately refuses to yield any other judgment than this. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." See how the penitent heaps word upon word to describe the evil that he has done; and it is all *his: my* transgressions, *my* iniquity, *my* sin. And even when he calls to mind the tainted stock from which he sprang—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"—he does so not to excuse, but rather to magnify his fault. Ah! yes, we may plead "taints of blood" or "sour grapes" so long as conscience is asleep; but when conscience is awake and has us by the throat we speak the language of the penitent Psalmist: "I

acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me."

"Our wills are ours, we know not how"—we cannot solve the mystery of our freedom, yet we are as sure of it as of our existence—"our wills are ours, to make them Thine." The peace that follows righteousness, the remorse that follows wrong-doing, the honour that everywhere men pay to self-sacrifice, the kindling indignation with which we listen to some story of base cunning and cruel wrong, the passionate thrill that stirs a whole people when a deed is done for freedom, when a blow is struck for truth—these things which, as Dr. Dale has said, are among the most splendid and the most awful experiences of human life, and which are just as real as the motions of the planets, or the rise and fall of the tides, can be understood only if man is free to choose 'twixt truth and falsehood, for the good or evil side.

If, therefore, we are living in conscious rebellion against the law of God, the plea of heredity will not serve us. We cannot, and we know we cannot, slip our necks out of the collar of responsibility in that easy fashion. Heredity, as Dr. Denney has said, may determine the *form* in which temptation shall come to a man—whether as intemperance or lust or greed or duplicity—but the *issue* of the temptation rests with the man himself. Occasion without and inclination within may join hands in one dire

confederacy against my soul, but all power in heaven and on earth is not theirs, and if I yield, the guilt is mine. Heredity is not fate; if any man is tempted to believe it is, let him resist the temptation as he would resist the devil. "Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xviii. 30, 31). What is the meaning of these tender entreaties on the lips of God? Do they not assure us that bad as our past may be, we can break with it if we will? Dr. Amory Bradford (of America) says that he once read a paper on heredity in the presence of a man who to-day is in the front rank of his profession. Before the reading had ceased the hearer was called out of the room. When he was gone there was found on the table by which he had been sitting a scrap of paper with these words, "That is true, and my heredity is all pure devil." But he had determined that the devil in him should be chained, and chained he had been, and now, says Dr. Bradford, "with full many a tendency to base living, he walks the earth everywhere useful and deservedly honoured."

"If there be a devil in man, there is an angel too." Let us give heed no more to the mutterings of the devil, but answer rather to the angel's call.

Let us shake ourselves free from the evil past. Let us break up the long torpor of indifference and cowardice, and show ourselves men. *If we will we can.*

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
> The youth replies, I can."

HEREDITY AND GRACE

"*The more clearly the conditions and laws of heredity are brought to light, the more hopeless are we likely to become, both as regards our own moral welfare and as regards the character of God, which is involved in that moral welfare, . . . and I have long thought that* if we have not a gospel against heredity, it is very doubtful whether we have any gospel at all."—J. RENDEL HARRIS.

"*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"—ST. PAUL.

XI

HEREDITY AND GRACE

IN the previous chapter a strong protest has been made against the idea that a man's fate is fixed by his past, that heredity destroys responsibility. Nevertheless, it remains true, there is a curse in birth. On that point science and religion are of one mind and speak with one voice. We all come of a tainted stock; we are all members of a race which sin has corrupted. What, then, is the remedy? Is there any remedy? And if there be, must man provide it for himself, or is it provided for him? You tell me that I am born with a hereditary bias towards evil; and I cannot deny it. I know that you are right. You tell me that, notwithstanding, I am a responsible being, responsible to man, responsible to God; and again I cannot deny it. I know that you are right. But is that all? Is there nothing more to be said? Can anything, can any one deliver me out of the body of this death, or am I shut up for ever to the poor resources of my own sin-cursed nature? That is the question to which now we must seek an answer.

I

(1) Some of our modern teachers answer the question in very short and summary fashion. If, say they, a man is bad, it is because he is "made so," and there is no help for it; and certainly we are not going to mend matters by preaching to him about his responsibility. But society, in its own interests, has a right to exclude such a man from its fellowship and, at the first convenient opportunity, get rid of him altogether. Lest any one should think I am exaggerating I will quote Mr. Cotter Morison's own words: "The sooner," he says, "it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will, though, of course, they may be made less bad, the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men, and the careful cultivation of the good only. This is what we do in every other department. We do not cultivate curs and screws and low breeds of cattle. On the contrary, we keep them down as much as we can. What do we gain by this fine language as to moral responsibility? The right to blame and so forth. Bad men are not touched by it. The bad man has no conscience; he acts after his malignant nature. The fear of sharp punishment may deter him from evil-doing, and quell his selfish appetites; but he will not be converted to virtue by our telling him he has moral responsibility, that he is a free agent to

choose good or evil, and that he ought to choose the good. His mind is made up to choose the bad. But society, knowing its own interests, has a right to exclude him from its fellowship ; not only to prevent and punish his evil actions, but to suppress him in some effectual way, and, above all, prevent his leaving a posterity as wicked as himself."

There you have the latest materialistic gospel of the extermination of the unfit. And, revolting as it sounds, it is but the logical issue, frankly stated, of the materialistic doctrine. If a man *is* only what his ancestors have made him, if he *is* only a piece of nature with no more responsibility than the beasts of the field, then, perhaps, society is warranted in dealing with him accordingly, though one would like to know what the results of the process of extermination are likely to be on the exterminators themselves. But at least it is an advantage to be shown thus plainly the steep place into the sea down which the upholders of this doctrine are prepared to lead us as soon as we are prepared to follow them.

(2) Another way of dealing with the problem of hereditary evil is to work for the redemption of the environment. The facts of heredity, it is urged, are beyond us ; if a man is born of debauched and dissolute parents, we cannot help it ; but, at least, we may see to it that unfavourable conditions of life do not minister to and strengthen the inborn tendency to vice ; and so,

by the creation of a healthier environment, we may be able to modify, if not wholly to neutralize, the evil influences of the past.

The truth and reasonableness of such a plea every one will recognize. It is in this direction that lie some of the most urgent problems that await the wisdom and energy of the Christian statesman. Overcrowding, insanitary dwellings, long and exhausting hours of labour, the multiplication of drink-shops—these things do not necessarily make men vicious, but they make the way of vice easy. It may be true that we cannot make men moral by Act of Parliament; nevertheless, Acts of Parliament can do very much to make impossible conditions of life which invite and induce immorality. It is not enough that Christian philanthropy pick up one by one the victims of our social wrongs; Christian statesmanship must lay its firm, strong hand on the causes which fling them helpless upon our streets. And happily, this is what, in increasing measure, is to-day being done. The public conscience is being awakened, and hosts of devoted men and women, throughout our whole land, are seeking, by the creation of healthier and happier conditions of life, to tame and subdue the demons of vice.

But do not let us deceive ourselves. The real problem is not the environment, but the man. You may change the one, but if you do not change the other, it will avail us nothing, for the unchanged bad man will speedily bring back again

all the old bad conditions. And no one knows that so well as those who have done most to improve the social condition of the people. A distinguished canon of the Anglican Church who has given many of the best years of his life to work among the poor of the East End of London, was addressing, in Whitechapel, some years ago, a meeting of men and women engaged like himself in promoting social reform. He reminded them how their fathers had built their hopes on the Suffrage, on Free Trade, and on National Education. Now we have these things, and what has come of them? he asked. The extension of the suffrage has done good, but it has not justified men's hopes concerning it; Free Trade has given us a cheap loaf, but it has not solved the problem of the unemployed; and even National Education, after a generation has been through our schools, has still left our streets filled with a mob of careless youths, and our labour market overstocked with workers whose work is not worth fourpence an hour. "No," concluded the speaker, "it is not laws and institutions which save a city—it is persons. Institutions are good, just in so far as they are vivified by personal action; laws are good just in so far as they allow for the free play of person on person. There may be need of reform in institutions and in laws, so as to give to all an open career and equality of opportunity, but it is persons who save; and if to-day fifty—a company of—righteous men could be found in

London, the city might be spared and saved." By all means let us work for the redemption of the environment, but let us never forget that we have still to find the redeemed man worthy to live and to walk in it.

(3) Then let us make our appeal to the man himself; let us speak to that better self which still lives, even in the worst. "If there be a devil in man, there is an angel too"; let us wake the slumbering angel. Does a man fight against fearful odds? Then the louder is the call to him to play the man, to break his birth's invidious bar, to breast the blows of circumstance and grapple with his evil star. It is a right worthy and noble appeal. "Quit you like men: be strong"; the old words thrill us through every fibre of our being; where, we wonder, is the soul that will not answer to a call like that? But I think of men far gone in sin, "carnal, sold under sin," men who have yielded themselves to it until they have become its helpless bond-slaves. And now, "when Duty whispers low, Thou must," they can only make answer, "I would, I would, but I cannot; iniquities are too strong for me." It is of no avail to bid such a man throw off his brute inheritance, to

> "Move upwards, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die."

He might have done it once; but for years he has fondled the beast, and fed it with his own

hand, and now its terrible paw is on his back, and he is helpless. Conscience, the captain on the bridge, still gives his commands, but the will, the man at the helm, is stunned and cannot obey. And I say, that if when it has come to that, we have nothing more to say than to bid a man exert and save himself, we had better hold our peace. When Mr. Cotter Morison tells us that a man will not be converted to virtue by our telling him he has moral responsibility, that he is a free agent to choose good or evil, and that he ought to choose the good, for once we may agree with him. Evil habits that have grown with our growth and strengthened with the strength of years are not to be met and mastered by appeals, however stirring and noble they may be.

II

Then what is the remedy, and whence cometh our help? Our need is clear: it is for a change not so much in our surroundings but in ourselves. This is our prayer—

> "Oh for a man to arise in me,
> That the man I am may cease to be."

When first the sense of evil stirs within us, we repent of what we have done; but when we come truly to know ourselves, we repent of what we are.[1] It is within us, in our nature, that evil has its seat, and it is within us, to our nature, that the

[1] See Dr. Denney's admirable *Studies in Theology*, p. 83.

remedy must be applied. It is not outward reformation that we need, but inward renewing; not re-*formation*, indeed, of any kind, but re-*generation*. "Ye must be born again." There is a curse in birth, and the only cure for it is the re-birth.

What do we mean by "regeneration"? "The simplest and most obvious account of regeneration," says Dr. Dale, "is the truest. When a man is regenerated he receives a new life, and receives it from God. In itself, regeneration is not a change in his old life, but the beginning of a new life which is conferred by the immediate and supernatural act of the Holy Spirit. The man is really 'born again.' A higher nature comes to him than that which he inherited from his human parents; he is 'begotten of God,' 'born of the Spirit.'"

Does some one ask, with Nicodemus, "How can these be?" we can only answer that we do not know; the mystery of the new birth can no man solve: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But if the manner of the great change be inexplicable, the fact is indubitable. When we speak of the work of the risen Christ, and the contemporary activities of the Holy Spirit, and the facts of regeneration and the powers which are freeing men from sin, we may, as Professor Drummond has said, use

language not less scientific, not less justified by fact, than when we speak in the terms of science of the operations and processes of the natural world. "There is," he adds, "a great experiment which is repeated every day, the evidence for which is as accessible as for any fact of science; its phenomena are as palpable as any in nature; its processes are as explicable, or as inexplicable; its purpose is as clear," viz. the great spiritual fact we call *conversion.*

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." This is the simplest statement of an experience which, as a distinguished student and teacher of science once declared,[1] has been testified to by countless millions of civilized men and women in all nations and all degrees of culture. Every day new witnesses arise to declare with St. Paul, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." Every day new voices join in the great doxology of St. John "Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by His blood." Let us give ear for a moment to some of their testimonies.

"From a child," writes John Bunyan, "I had but few equals, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God. Yea, so settled and rooted was I in these things, that they

[1] The late Prof. G. J. Romanes in his interesting *Thoughts on Religion.*

became as a second nature to me. . . . Until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness." Such John Bunyan was; what, by the grace of God, he became, all the world knows.

Nowhere, perhaps, have we a finer "experimental theology" than may be read in the best hymns of the great Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. When converted Cornish miners and Kingswood colliers sang—

> "He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
> He sets the prisoner free,"

the deepest experience of their whole life was finding a voice for itself. Like Peter chained between the soldiers, they too had been in bondage, and they sang—

> "Long my imprison'd spirit lay
> Fast bound in sin and nature's night";

but to them, as to the apostle, God had sent His delivering angel, and once more they sang—

> "Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
> I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
> My chains fell off, my heart was free,
> I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

And though there be no Charles Wesley now to translate the experience into immortal song, the experience is still, thank God, being every day repeated in our midst. I turn to the beautiful

Letters of James Smetham, and find him writing of St. Paul's Epistles: "All that unutterable sense of sin, that terrible deadly fight with evil, those strivings of the Spirit I went through, and more: all that deliverance, that liberty of the Gospel, that being justified by faith in Christ, that peace with God, that shedding abroad by the Holy Ghost of the love of God in the heart, that coming in of the 'new creation'; all the shades and lights of experience since then. Twenty-three years of such experience, which inwardly is as great and as simple a fact as the facts of seeing and hearing, make me unable to receive, even to *per*ceive any other interpretation. And I have met with such scores and hundreds who strike hands with me in life and death on these great matters that it is settled 'without controversy' to me."

And then from the words of the cultured and gifted artist, I turn to this simple testimony of a reclaimed Lancashire drunkard: "Religion," he said, "has changed my home, my heart, and you can all see it has changed my face. I hear some of those London men call themselves Positivists. Bless God, I am a Positivist. I'm positive God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned my sins, changed my heart, and made me a new creature."[1]

But when Mr. Cotter Morison comes across a fact like this he is simply bewildered; he does not

[1] Quoted in Prof. W. T. Davison's *Christian Interpretation of Life*, p. 272.

know what to make of it. "We can never tell," he writes in amazement, "whether the greatest sinner now, may not become the greatest saint before the end"; and he is perfectly right, we never can tell. "This unknown factor of Grace," he continues, stumbling against the truth without knowing it, "vitiates all calculation." Undoubtedly it does; the fact could not be better stated; there is nothing to compare with the surprises of Divine grace. God flings Himself athwart the track of a man's life, and behold, as Bishop Hall says of the penitent robber, "he that in the morning was posting towards hell is in the evening with Christ in Paradise." Such wonders grace can do!

But when the plastic days of youth are gone, when life has got its "set," when tendency and habit have joined hands—what then? "Can a man be born when he is old?" Yes, thank God, he can. Is it not written, "The man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was wrought"? And God, who works the greater miracles of grace, is heedless of the years of sin. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." Let us receive Him, let us believe on Him, and we shall be "begotten of God," made partakers of the Divine nature.

THE GIBRALTAR OF PROTESTANTISM

"*Wherefore it is very necessary that this doctrine* [*of faith*] *be kept in continual practice and public exercise, both of reading and hearing. And although it be never so well known, never so exactly learned, yet the devil, who continually rangeth about, seeking to devour us, is not dead. Likewise our flesh and old man is yet alive. Besides this, all kinds of temptations do vex and oppress us on every side; wherefore, this doctrine can never be taught, urged, and repeated enough. If this doctrine be lost there is also the doctrine of truth, life, and salvation, lost and gone. If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish; religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things which are necessary for a Christian man to know.*"—MARTIN LUTHER.

XII

THE GIBRALTAR OF PROTESTANTISM

ST. PAUL'S Epistle to the Galatians is very closely linked with the most painful controversy of the apostle's life; and to understand the epistle it is necessary to know something of the controversy. It came about in this way. The first Christians were Jews, and in becoming Christians did not cease to be Jews. Just as the early Methodists were at first a sect within the larger Anglican Church, so the first Christians were a sect within the larger Jewish Church, to whose ritual and customs they in all things conformed. But as gradually the Church pushed back its frontier, at first timidly and tentatively, but afterwards, under the leadership of St. Paul, boldly and with the conviction of a world-wide mission, the question necessarily arose: what about the Gentiles who accepted the Christian faith? Must they also be circumcised and charged to keep the whole law of Moses? Must they become Jews in order that they might be-

come Christians? The question was answered in the vision that was granted to Peter of the vessel let down from heaven to earth, and in the conversion of Cornelius the Roman centurion and his household. It was answered again, and this time in the most formal and solemn manner possible, by the unanimous finding of the Council of Jerusalem. And each time the answer was, "No; not by the law of Moses, but by the grace of Jesus Christ, are men saved; therefore, circumcision profiteth us nothing." But even the decision of the Jerusalem Council did not close the question, nor silence the controversy.

We may be astonished at this short-sighted provincialism that would have kept the world within the tiny measurements of its own little tape-line; but when we remember the past history of the Jews, and when we see how slow nations still are to believe anything that cuts against the grain of national pride and national prejudice, it is no great marvel that many Jewish Christians should have thought that Jerusalem was still to be the centre of the whole earth, and the Messiah who had come but the Head of a bigger Judaism. And so the Judaizers, as Paul's opponents were called, went on with their work. Not content with resisting the spread of the wider faith at home, they organized an active propaganda for checking its progress abroad. Emissaries from Jerusalem crept into the Gentile churches which the apostle had founded; they denied his

authority, they discredited his gospel, they sowed the seed of dissension broadcast, and in many cases succeeded in alienating his converts both from him and the faith which he preached.

It was to counteract evil influences such as these, in the churches of Galatia, that Paul wrote this letter. It is at once an appeal and a thunderbolt, an appeal to his converts, a thunderbolt against their betrayers; and appeal and thunderbolt alike come hot from his heart. Surprise, grief, love, indignation—all commingle in one hurrying tide. The apostle instructs, he argues, he warns, he remonstrates; he exhausts all the resources of logic, of Scripture, and of experience; and when these seem but cold and ineffectual—when the pent-up waters of his heart can find no other channel for themselves—he breaks through all restraint, and flings himself at the feet of his converts as if he would stay them by the tender violence of love: "My little children," he cries, "of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you, I could wish to be present with you now, for I am perplexed about you."

I

The Jewish emissaries, I have said, not only assailed the apostle's doctrine, they denied his authority. Indeed, it was part of their plan to damage the message by discrediting the messenger. Paul has, therefore, to defend both himself and

his Gospel, and his Gospel through himself. This personal apologetic is the subject of the first two chapters of the epistle. With chapter three begins the doctrinal polemic. Let me fix attention for a moment on two of the lines of argument by which the apostle urges his readers to stand fast in the faith of Christ.

(1) "Ye that have come to know God," he says, "or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments?" (iv. 9). The whole movement is retrograde, it is a "turning back," a reversion to an earlier and less perfect type of religion. Judaism had its day and did its work, "but Christ having come," its day is past, its work is done; it has no longer a place in the world, and for *Christian* men, men who "have come to know God" in Christ, to seek to revive it, is to put back the hands of the world's clock, it is to violate all ideas of true progress. So runs the apostle's argument; let us listen while he illustrates it.

"The law," he says, "hath been our παιδαγωγός to bring us to Christ" (iii. 24). It is almost impossible to translate the word Paul uses, because that which it represents does not now exist amongst us. "Schoolmaster" (A.V.) is clearly misleading; and "tutor" (R.V.), though probably the best, is by no means an exact rendering. "The 'pedagogue,'" says Professor Findlay, "was a sort of nursery governor,—a confidential servant in the Greek household, commonly a slave, who had charge of

the boy from his infancy, and was responsible for his oversight. In his food, his clothes, his home-lessons, his play, his walks—at every point the pedagogue was required to wait upon his young charge, and to control his movements." And this, says the apostle, is what hitherto the law hath been to us; "but," he goes on, "now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor;" and shall we, he asks in amazement, who are "sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus," who have outgrown the petty regulations of the pedagogue, deliberately submit ourselves again to his authority?

Again, Paul takes the case of a son who is his father's heir (iv. 1 *sq.*). During the years of his minority he is "under guardians and stewards," so that "he differeth nothing from a bond-servant, though" in reality "he is lord of all." But when the time "appointed of the father" is fulfilled, he enters into all the rights and privileges of sonship. Similarly, argues the apostle, the world before Christ came was in its nonage, "under the law"; but now that "the fulness of the time" has come, we have received "the adoption of the sons." And can it be we are so foolish, that, when all the rights of sonship are ours, we still hanker after the old days of bondage "under guardians and stewards"? The whole character and history of the law reveal its temporary purpose, and to go back upon it now would be utterly to frustrate the Divine idea.

"Moreover," Paul says to the Galatians (as we to-day have often to say to our High Anglican friends), "if you will go back, take care you go back far enough." The Judaizers made much of Moses and of the Law; but before Moses was Abraham, before the Law was the Promise—the promise that in Abraham should all the nations of the earth be blessed. That promise still stands, and that it may be fulfilled Christ has died, that by His death He might redeem us from the curse of the law, and that so "upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus."

(2) But a movement towards Judaism is not only a backward movement, it is needless, since Christ Himself is all-sufficient for man's salvation.

Salvation is not to be found in Christ *plus* circumcision, or any other fragment of Judaism, but in Christ alone. To seek to eke out the work of the world's Redeemer with some poor Judaic rite is to make void the grace of God, of none effect the Cross of Christ. Salvation cannot be both of grace and of works; the two ideas are mutually exclusive. "Ye who would be justified by the law," Paul tells the Galatians plainly, "are severed from Christ; ye are fallen away from grace." And if, as their new teachers declared, righteousness is "through the law," this is what it means: "Christ died for nought"—the path ends in a precipice, and Calvary that we thought the world's one hope becomes instead its

most tragic blunder: "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing."

But Christ might be to them everything. This was the Gospel given to him of God to proclaim unto every man; this was the Gospel which he had himself received and verified in his own experience; ay, and it was the Gospel that once they, too, had believed, and whose power they had proved. "Tell me this one thing," he says, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Let them go back upon their past and question it, and then let them say if all of power and peace and blessedness that had come into their lives had not come and come alone by faith in Christ.

This, then, was Paul's message to his wavering disciples in Galatia, his answer to the false teachers of Jerusalem. So far as the latter are concerned, it is satisfactory to learn that the epistle abundantly accomplished its purpose. Never again did Paul need to write such a letter as this; the Judaizers were crushed and silenced; their movement came to an end; and Christianity, that but for Paul might—speaking after the manner of men—have dwindled into the religion of an obscure Jewish sect, was saved for the race, and set free for its world-wide mission.

But though the old controversy which called this epistle into life is dead and buried, no mould gathers about the epistle itself; it is still the

word of God, quick and powerful, with its message for us to-day no less than for those to whom it was first sent. Before, however, I turn to speak of that, let us pause for a moment to note how inseparably this epistle is linked with the name of Martin Luther and the great days of the Reformation.

II

After the days of the apostles the Church of Christ fell gradually away from the simplicity of its early faith. Human agents and agencies thrust themselves between the soul and its Saviour, until, bit by bit, there was built up a vast ecclesiastical institution which claimed to be the sole dispenser, on its own terms, of the favours and mercies of Heaven. The Church, as one recent writer has happily put it, constructed a tremendous apparatus "through which the sinful soul was passed, like the rags into a paper-mill, to come out, after a long and terrible discipline, white and pure at the other end." Then, in due time, came the Reformation, when the primitive Christian idea, the very truth of the New Testament, was rediscovered in the experience of a human soul. For when Martin Luther realized that salvation is by faith in the mercy of God revealed to us in Christ, he swept aside the priest and the whole system of things of which the priest is the centre, and the Reformation had begun. And one of the chief instruments used by God to effect this

mighty revolution, first in the soul of Luther, and afterwards in the soul of Europe, was our Epistle to the Galatians, which has well been called "The Gibraltar of Protestantism." Among all the epistles it was always Luther's favourite: "It is my epistle," he said; "I have betrothed myself to it; it is my wife." Or, to use a very different figure, it was the armoury from which he drew the weapons for his holy war, "the gun-shot and artillery" with which he destroyed the papacy; and among the great religious books of the world Luther's Commentary on the Galatians will always keep a first place.

Thomas Boston of Ettrick, one of the ablest men who ever stepped into a Scottish pulpit, had only a scanty library—readers of his *Autobiography* will remember the passage in which he tells us how it touched him to the quick when one day a visitor smiled as he peeped into the poorly-furnished book-press in the little manse—but among the few volumes there was *Luther on the Galatians*, which, he says, "I was much taken with." And every student of John Bunyan remembers the famous passage in which he tells us how God, "in whose hands are all our days and ways," did cast into his hand one day this book by Martin Luther. It was only an old and worn copy, "so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece, if I did but turn it over"; but as he read its torn and soiled pages, it seemed, he says, "as if his book had been written out of my heart."

"And this," he goes on, "I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible), before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience." Let every student who would understand the secret of the Reformation, and every man who desires healing for the wounds of his conscience, keep Luther's great Commentary at his elbow.

III

I return to the epistle and its message for the Church of Christ to-day. "But what has a letter like this to do with us? We are in no danger from Judaism; nobody troubles us about circumcision." True; yet the ritualist and sacerdotalist of the nineteenth century are in the direct line of descent from these men who disturbed the peace of the Galatian Christians, and at the present moment they are troubling us more than enough. Dr. Forsyth declares, with equal severity and truth, that the modern priest is "a Jew in soul," and that modern priestism is really a kind of perpetuated Judaism, an attempt "to bring in at the window the reign of Law which St. Paul, in Christ's name, turned out at the door."

One of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of religion is the strange fascination of the ritualist. "O foolish Galatians," exclaims St. Paul, "who hath *bewitched* you?" The word contains a striking metaphor, "derived," says

Bishop Lightfoot, "from the popular belief in the power of the evil eye," the blighting influence which, it was supposed, certain persons were able to cast over those on whom their glance fell. No more fitting word could have been used in such a context. Many to-day are so "bewitched" by the spells of the ritualist that they utterly fail to realize the issues that are at stake; they cannot understand what all the Protestant pother is about, and whatever may be the sins of the ritualistic curate, they think they are all covered by his abounding zeal and multitudinous phil anthropies. Yet, unless the reasoning of this Epistle to the Galatians be wholly wide of the mark, it is the Gospel itself that is at stake. The men who opposed Paul, let it be remembered, believed in Christ; but they held that circumcision as well as Christ was necessary to salvation. Our modern Catholics—Roman or Anglican—likewise believe in Christ; but they, too, deny the sole sufficiency of Christ. Salvation, they tell us, can only be administered by a particular organization, through the priest and the Church,—*their* priest, and *their* church,—without these we have nothing to hope for but the poor crumbs of "uncovenanted mercies." Now, what is this but the old cry of the Judaizer over again: "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved"? It is the virtual denial of the sufficiency of Christ for the salvation of them that trust in Him. And, I repeat, with this epistle in my hand, they that affirm these

things take away my Gospel; and it is no answer and no comfort to me to be told that they are zealous philanthropists.

A recent Anglican expositor, I observe, states that what St. Paul meant by this letter to teach was this: "That religious acts and exercises are dangerous, and may become destructive, when they are deliberately adopted as *substitutes for spiritual character*." That such a warning may very fittingly be addressed to Christian men, no one will deny; but to say that this was the aim of the epistle before us is to miss the point of the whole argument. The relation of religious rites and exercises to spiritual character was not in the apostle's mind; and if any one had interrupted him in the midst of his letter to assure him that many of his Judaizing opponents were men of estimable personal character, I think he would have brushed the objection aside as a chattering irrelevance. What he affirms is, that when any religious rite or observance or institution is made co-ordinate with Christ as essential to salvation, he will tolerate it, no, not for an hour, at any price, or on any terms.

With freedom did Christ set us free; let us stand fast, therefore, and refuse to be entangled again in the yoke of ceremonialism. To all our modern Judaizers, to them that observe days and months and seasons, who are greatly exercised concerning the lawfulness of incense and the sin of evening communion, who think there can be

no church where there is no bishop, who live and move and have their being among the things that are seen and temporal, we make answer with the Apostle Paul: "Ye that have come to know God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments?" Your whole movement is a backward movement; ye are as grown-up men that go back to the ABC picture-book of their childhood; ye are chasing mere will-o'-the-wisps of the night, and behold, the sun is up! Let us, who are the children of the day, turn our faces to God's light.

And, above all, let us believe and let us proclaim the sufficiency of Christ. We need no confessional, for we know of One who hath power on earth to forgive sins. We seek no infallible Church or infallible Pope, for we hold the promise of the Spirit who will guide us into all truth. We look for no Christ bodily present on the altar, through the wonder-working power of the priest, for we have a Presence not less "real" because unseen in every faithful heart.

> "Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,
> He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
> Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
> Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

He is able to save "*unto the uttermost.*" Who can add anything to Christ's "uttermost"? Who has needs that "uttermost" cannot reach?

Thou, O Christ, art ALL I want.

CONCERNING "GETTING ON"

"She told me dreadful things about the demoralizing power of riches in our time."

"Dreadful things! What were they, Winnie?"

"She told me how insatiable is the greed for pleasure at this time. She told me that the passion of vanity—'the greatest of all the human passions,' as she used to say—has taken the form of money-worship in our time, sapping all the noblest instincts of men and women, and in rich people poisoning even parental affections, making the mother thirst for the pleasures which in old days she would only have tried to win for her child. She told me stories—dreadful stories—about children with expectations of great wealth who watched the poor grey hairs of those who gave them birth, and counted the years and months and days that kept them from the gold which modern society finds to be more precious than honour, family, heroism, genius, and all that was held precious in less materialized times. She told me a thousand other things of this kind, and when I grew older she put into my hand what has been written on the subject."

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON'S "AYLWIN."

XIII

CONCERNING "GETTING ON"

"*WHAT shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" A man might ask that question who did not know the value of the world; a man might ask it who did not know the value of the soul. But He who first asked it knew the value of both. He knew the world's worth, for He made it. He knew the soul's worth, for He not only made it, but died for it; and *He* says that a man may get till he has gained the whole world, but if the price that he pays for it be his own soul—himself—he is the loser. For, after all, the supreme question is not what a man has, but what a man is. I may gather about me all manner of goodly things, but these are not me; the soul cannot eat and drink, and amid all the heaped-up splendours it may starve and die. "They say that —— is worth £10,000 a year." I beg your pardon, a man may be worth little or much, but whatever it be it is not to be stated in terms of the market.

What we have, that is one thing; what we are worth, that is another and wholly different thing. Have ye not read, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"?

But, first of all, let us clear our minds of cant. There is a fluent depreciation of wealth, and an equally fluent appreciation of poverty, in which some persons, who are in danger of neither, are very apt to indulge. It is time to put an end to these glib insincerities. Poverty is not a blessing but a curse. That some good men have been miserably poor is nothing to the point; it was not their poverty that made them good. "Man shall not live by bread alone"; neither can he live without it, and when all his days and hours are consumed in one fierce struggle to obtain it, what wonder if sometimes he grow hard and bitter? We shudder at the coarse, cunning faces that sometimes pass us on the street, but what kind of a look would our faces wear if we had little children at home crying for bread, and for days together we knew not where the next meal was to come from? "Long live hunger! Long live sorrow! Long live pain! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." Nay, indeed, it is in His name that we are to fight these things, until He shall have put all His enemies under His feet.

On the other hand, let it also be clearly understood that, often as wealth and worth are severed, wealth may be one of worth's outward

and visible signs. The large income of one of our "captains of industry" (as Carlyle used to name them); the increase in the salary of a youth who by his alertness and fidelity has made himself not only useful but indispensable to his employers; the savings of the skilful, thrifty, and industrious workman—all these (though one could wish, by the way, that there were not so great a gap between the income of the capitalist and that of the workman) are not only the just and natural reward of work well done; they are, so far as in their nature they can be, representative of sterling qualities of mind and character. Speaking generally, the lazy, the thriftless, and the dishonest sink down lower and lower, as it is meet and right they should; but the honest, the careful, and the hard-working rise up higher and higher, and this also is meet and right. The difference in the position of the two classes in the scale of social well-being is a roughly accurate index to underlying differences of character.

Let all this, both on the one side and on the other, be admitted and emphasized as it ought to be. Nevertheless, there is no graver peril that menaces our life to-day, either as a nation or as individuals, than the practical materialism which like a dry rot is spreading among all ranks and classes of society.

> "We must run glittering like a brook
> In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
> The wealthiest man among us is the best;

No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry, and these we adore.
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence
And pure religion breathing household laws."

It is nearly a century since Wordsworth's noble sonnet was written, but the intervening years have only given a sharper point to the poet's warning. A short time ago, it is said, a wealthy South African was dining at a London house, when he was asked by one of the company what was his chief ambition in life. "My chief ambition," said he, "is to leave a million to each of my children." There is the disease which is eating, "as doth a canker," at the heart of the whole English-speaking world to-day.

Now do not grow impatient and say that whatever South African millionaires may do, we are not likely to cherish any such wild ambitions; that, indeed, we might as well cry for the moon at once. I am not in the habit, I hope, of preaching to congregations that are not there; and my words just now are not meant for millionaires, but for all young men who may read these pages. Not on the Stock Exchange merely, but in all the walks of life do we need to write up Christ's great searching question: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" For, alas! the fatal materializing of life is going on everywhere.

Instead of praying the wise man's prayer: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me," we open wide our mouths to snatch at every glittering bait that dangles before us.

Every week the working men and women of this country fling away thousands of pounds out of their hard-earned wages, on the chance that some horse which they never saw, and of which they know absolutely nothing, may be the first to pass the winning-post, or in the hope that by some lucky hit they will secure the first place in a "guessing competition," and that so they will be able to enrich themselves at the expense of others as foolish as they are.

To a true lover of sport—and no man loves his favourite game more than I do mine—what can be more humiliating than to see our great national pastimes degraded into huge money-making concerns? I can well believe that under certain circumstances horse-racing might have been a noble and beautiful sport; as it is, the turf is a great gaming-table and (as Lord Beaconsfield once said) a gigantic engine of national demoralization. And now it seems as if our football clubs are to pass into the hands of syndicates and companies whose chief concern is not good sport but big dividends. I used to watch with a certain natural interest the fortunes of the club belonging to my native town; but what do I care about the performances of a team which, though it keeps the

old name, has been bought up from nobody knows where, and will be scattered again as soon as the directors (in the interests of the shareholders) find it expedient to sell out?

Or turn to the world of commerce itself, and say if this is not the security of many a giant wrong that lifts its head among us to-day: that that which a man would never dare to do singly, and in his own name, he will quietly wink at when it is done by a company of which he happens to be a shareholder; until one is sometimes tempted to say in his haste that a company would sell its soul, if it had one, that it might declare a bigger dividend. And over and above all this, which of course may go on without the infringement of a single letter of the law, there are those—the meanest spawn of Mammonism—who prey upon the unwary, and devour widows' houses, and care not who are wronged if they may get. You remember Trooper Peter Halket's soliloquy by night on the African veldt. When he had served his time and the Government had given him a piece of land, he would set about "to make his pile." First, he should have to start a syndicate, called the Peter Halket Gold, or the Peter Halket Iron Mining, or some such name, Syndicate. Peter Halket was not very clear as to how it ought to be started; but he felt certain that he and some other men would have to take shares. They would not have to pay for them. And then they would get some big man in London to take

shares. He need not pay for them; they would give them to him; and then the company would be floated. No one would have to pay anything; it was just the name—"The Peter Halket Gold Mining Company, Limited." It would float in London; and people there who didn't know the country would buy the shares; *they* would have to give ready money for them, of course; perhaps fifteen pounds a share when they were up! And then, when the market was up, he, Peter Halket, would sell out all his shares. If he gave himself only six thousand and sold them each for ten pounds, then he, Peter Halket, would have sixty thousand pounds! And then he would start another company, and another, and——

And even when we turn in other directions where we might have hoped for better things, we still come on the trail of the Mammonite. Look, *e.g.*, at some of our modern Socialist programmes. There is not a little in them that is admirable, not a little that we may reasonably expect to see realized. Yet to read some of the Socialist publications you would think that man was only a mouth that needed to be fed, and that in fulness of bread and shortness of hours his millennium is to be found—so utterly material is the gospel which they preach.

Now it is against this universal debasing of the ideals of life, this measuring of all things by the standards of commerce, this idea that there is no true "getting on" which has not its immediate

cash equivalent, that "the wealthiest man among us is the best"—it is against this that we need continually to be on our guard.

Think for a moment of some of those who in our own time have governed their life by ideals like these, and who have come almost as near as a man can to gaining the whole world. What have their fabulous fortunes done for them? One of the most painfully interesting biographies of recent years is that of the late "Barney" Barnato. He did not merely make money to live—most of us have to do that—he lived to make money. "This one thing I do," he might have said; "I make money." Finance was his sole business. "He had to run stocks up and down, to buy and clear out, at what is called the psychological moment." All the higher interests of life were choked by his passion for gold. Politics, literature, art—he cared for none of these things. Life to him was just one huge Stock Exchange, and his fellow-creatures only so many share-selling, share-buying bipeds. As for the Kaffirs—he did not count them his fellow-creatures—what did they exist for but to enable him to pocket his sixty per cent dividends? And the end of it all? A coroner's inquest; verdict: Death by drowning while temporarily insane.

One of the ablest of our living journalists used to keep on his office wall the portraits of a number of the most famous millionaires of the day; then as, one after another, they passed away, he noted

under their portraits the circumstances of their death. A little time ago he gathered up the results of his observations in a terrible article entitled "The Tragedy of a Millionaire." Here are some of his facts: Mr. Hooley, who bought big concerns for millions, is now a bankrupt. The Duke of Bedford, with his large estates and an income of £300,000, took away his own life. Colonel North, after buying his way into "society" by the millions he had coined, dropped dead in the midst of all his busy schemes. Joel, a member of the same South African confraternity as Barnato, was shot dead in his own office. Ferdinand de Lesseps, after piling up a big fortune made out of the forced labour of men whose bones are bleaching by the Suez Canal and the still unpierced Isthmus of Panama, died broken-hearted and disgraced. One New York millionaire, Mr. Russell Sage, has been shot at in his own office. Another, the late Jay Gould, was threatened with being hanged on the nearest lamp-post; his whole life was one incessant grind for money, and he died, worn out, at a comparatively early age. "How happy you must be, Mr. Vanderbilt," said some one to the American Railway King, "with all those millions!" "Happy?" he replied; "why, I have not an hour's happiness in my life. Consider: I cannot eat or drink more than other men, I cannot wear more clothes, I only require one bed to sleep in. All the rest is not only superfluous, it is the cause

of perpetual trouble. My millions cause me ceaseless anxiety day and night."

These, with others like them, all lived and died in the faith that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And even if we forget the bitter fruits it bore for them, what great names rise to silence their shameless creed. Socrates, we are told, held no property, lived on whatever came to hand, and wore the same simple clothes winter and summer. Milton "lived in a small house, supped on olives and cold water, and wore coarse though clean clothing." Who ever thinks how much money Shakespeare made? When Pope Pius IV. heard of the death of John Calvin he declared that that "heretic's" strength lay in this, that money never had the slightest charm for him. Probably no man has exerted so great an influence in the English-speaking world during the last hundred and fifty years as John Wesley, and to the day of his death Wesley was absolutely indifferent to wealth. One year at Oxford his income was £30; he lived on £28 and gave away the other two. The next year, receiving £60, he still lived on £28 and gave away £32. The third year he received £90, and gave away £62. The fourth year he received £120; still he lived as before on £28, and gave to the poor £92. During the whole of his life, Southey says, Wesley probably gave away not less than £30,000; and when once he composed an epitaph for

himself he concluded it with the words, "not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds behind him."

Recent missionary biography has no more beautiful chapter than that of *An Old Missionary*, written by Sir William Hunter. For long years he laboured among the hillmen of India, teaching, healing, ministering, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus how that He said, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Sorrows came upon him; his wife died, his sight failed him. Yet still he held to his post and died at it; and Sir William Hunter tells how when at last the end came, non-Christian tribesmen hurried in under their chiefs, forty miles without a pause for food and water, to do homage to their white father and friend. Yonder he sleeps in his nameless grave, under the Indian sun; what a contrast with the millionaire clutching at his dividends and then perishing miserably by his own hand in mid-Atlantic! And—did you ever think of it?—"the one perfect life that has been lived in this world is the life of Him who owned nothing, and who left nothing but the clothes He wore." The Son of Man had not where to lay His head. How His three-and-thirty years freeze with one rebuke our Mammon-loving age that thinks the wealthiest man among us is the best!

And yet, no, in our hearts we do *not* count the wealthiest man the best. We may join with them

that crowd and jostle in the temple of Mammon and that cry unceasingly, "O Mammon, hear us! O Mammon, hear us!" But when we are alone with our better selves, when we go down into that little private chapel where no one goes but ourselves, we know that the Mammon-worshippers are all wrong, we know that we were made for higher things, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth, that there is nothing that a man can give in exchange for his soul.

You aim to succeed? You want to get on? You do well. But settle what you mean by success. Remember you may be getting, without getting on; you may be getting and still going down. "It were better," says John Henry Newman, "for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, than that one soul should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse." We may think the language exaggerated; but, young men, my brothers, you and I are never safe until the conviction is rooted within us, unalterable as the axioms of Euclid, that things material can never be the measure of things moral and spiritual, that worlds cannot outweigh the value of a soul.

Christ has no controversy with us because we are too ambitious, because we aim too high. Rather

does He charge it against us that we do not aim high enough, that our ambitions are too paltry. "Seek ye first," He says, "the kingdom of God and His righteousness"; and to that high life He calls us all.

LOST SORROWS

"*All chastening for the present seemeth to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.*"—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

"*Trial only stops when it is useless: that is why it scarcely ever stops.*"—AMIEL.

"*It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling, if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it—if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy—the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love.*"—GEORGE ELIOT.

XIV

LOST SORROWS

IS there not something infinitely pathetic in the continual going back of one generation after another to the old, sad mystery of pain? There is, I suppose, nothing new to be said about it, there is no fresh light to be cast upon it; yet men still wait and watch and hope, still the poor brain busies itself, and the torn heart cries aloud, "My God, my God, why—?" Other questions we answer, or they answer themselves, or we are content they should go unanswered; but this question is always with us. And, indeed, how should it be otherwise, since on every man, soon or late, the dark mystery thrusts itself? "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble": the words are very old, they are never obsolete. The generations come and go, but sorrow and pain and death abide. In the cathedral at Carlisle there is a memorial to five little children of the late Archbishop Tait. In

one terrible month, March 10 to April 10, all five were carried off by death and laid in a single grave. "I have not had the heart," wrote their stricken father, "to make any entry in my journal for above nine weeks. When last I wrote I had six daughters on earth; now I have one." Not often, indeed, do the blows fall in such swift and awful succession; sometimes it may seem as if we were to escape altogether; then comes the inevitable hour, and we are mourners with the rest.

How powerless are the strongest when the day of trouble dawns! Wealth can do many things; but when Death notches his arrow on the string, wealth is only a pasteboard helmet.

> "The glories of our birth and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things:
>
> . . . . .
>
> "Death lays his icy hand on kings;
> Sceptre and crown
> Must tumble down
> And in the dust be equal made
> With the poor crooked scythe and spade."

Nor can the highest medical skill avail to shut the door against suffering. There is surely no more touching chapter in recent biography than that which tells how Sir James Young Simpson, the great Edinburgh physician, who healed so many, was yet powerless to keep pain and death from his own home. His first-born, so we read, his sweet-souled little Maggie, at four years died

in agony, begging for water which her closed throat would not let her swallow; another daughter had but a year's lease of life. One son was a sufferer from infancy, and the darkness of blindness was closing in on him when death lulled him to rest; another was snatched away just when, after years of study, he was ready to give to his overburdened father the relief he so sorely needed.

And, what sometimes seems hardest of all, even goodness cannot save us. When the fiery trial cometh upon us to prove us, we are not to think it strange, as though some strange thing had happened unto us. "Yourselves know," wrote the apostle, "that hereunto we are appointed." It is through "much tribulation" that we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven. They whom John saw before the throne were they "which come out of the great tribulation." God scourgeth *every* son whom He receiveth. So that, whatever gulfs divide us, we are one in suffering; sorrow makes the whole world kin, it knits mankind into one great brotherhood.

So far, then, there is a certain rough equality amongst us; suffering is the common lot. And if, in this matter, one differs from another, it is not so much that one suffers more and another less—though this, of course, is true—but that to one his suffering is only suffering, and to another it is chastening, discipline. Not in the degree of our suffering, but in what we make of it, in what

it makes of us, lies the real difference. "Sweet are the uses of adversity"; the lives of some seem like one long commentary on the saying; but others never learn the hard lesson; their sorrows (to use Thomas Erskine's striking phrase) are all "lost sorrows," they yield no peaceable fruit of righteousness. For, let us remember, there is nothing necessary, nothing mechanical, in the action of suffering; pain does not always discipline, chastisements do not always chasten. What suffering makes of us depends upon how we think of it, in what spirit we meet it, how we bear up under it. When disasters fall thick and fast upon us, there are, as one has said, three alternatives: there is suicide, there is stoicism, and there is faith.

(1) Concerning the first alternative nothing need now be said, except that in speaking of "suicide" I mean (as does the writer whose words I have adopted) not only the determined taking away of life, but the use of everything that unlawfully deadens the sensibilities. This is no matter, verily, for harsh and pitiless judgment, but for a man to seek to drown his grief in drink, with "dull narcotics numbing pain," is to be guilty of self-murder, it is to play the part of a coward, it is to abdicate the throne of manhood, it is to deny God.

(2) The second alternative is stoicism. It was in that spirit that Emily Brontë, with whitening face and set mouth, met the

woes of her hard brief life in the parsonage at Haworth.

> "Yes, as my swift days near their goal,"

—it was her own prayer—

> "'Tis all that I implore;
> In life and death a chainless soul
> With courage to endure."

"Full of ruth for others," writes her sister Charlotte, "on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hands, the unnerved limbs, the fading eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health." And, unyielding to the last, she died, literally on her feet.

Mr. W. E. Henley strikes the same iron chord in his wonderful little poem—

> "Out of the night that covers me,
> Black as the pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul.
>
> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud,
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.
>
> Beyond this place of wrath and tears
> Looms but the horror of the shade,
> And yet the menace of the years
> Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.
>
> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate,
> I am the captain of my soul."

That here are elements of grandeur in a creed like this no one will deny. To us, born in these hardy northern climes, love of whatsoever things are brave and firm and true is strong as an instinct, and the stoic never appeals to us wholly in vain. And yet, do I need to say, this is a creed infinitely below the Christian faith? At the best it can never be more than the refuge of the few. Here and there you may find a man of iron nerve and resolute will who will brave the storm and bid the tempest do its worst, and steer right onward through the night, nor bate a jot of heart or hope till the day break again sweet and clear. But most of us, if we are shut up to our own resources, if help do not come to us from without, must lie down and die, or seek alleviations which are worse than death. No, there is no help for us in stoicism.

(3) The only other alternative is faith. What, in a word, is the Christian faith concerning suffering? I do not know how I can put it better than in Silas Marner's simple words: "There's dealings with us—there's dealings." We are not

> "Poor windle straws
> On the great, sullen, roaring pool of Time
> And Chance and Change."

Through all our life a purpose runs; even sorrow and pain and death have their place in the great Divine scheme of things. As it behoved Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory, so also here-

unto are we appointed; and though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, yet afterward, unto them that have been exercised thereby, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

"Afterward"; let us not shrink from the word, it touches not only time but eternity, let us give it its full meaning, let us follow it out to the eternity whither it points. Much of what the Bible has to say concerning future blessedness, that we through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, might never have been written, so little do even Christian men and women give heed to it to-day. But in the New Testament the thought of the future is everywhere present, everywhere calculated on. The Christian life, the purposes of God, all are planned, so to speak, not on the time scale but on the eternal scale. No chastening for the present "seemeth to be joyous"; nevertheless, to them that are exercised thereby the harvest is sure: afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Something, much, may be gathered here, and now; but, sometimes, God's harvests ripen slowly, and it may be only in His eternity that we shall come again with rejoicing, our arms full of sheaves. But—this is the divine promise, this is the Christian faith—"in due season," then if not now, yonder if not here, "we shall reap if we faint not."

This, then, is the Christian faith, and though

for its full verification we must wait, in part at least, it may be verified now. Turn to the lives of the saints—it hardly matters which volume you take down from the long row—they will all teach us how to sanctify our sorrows. "I never knew," said Samuel Rutherford, "by my nine years' preaching, so much of Christ's love as He hath taught me in Aberdeen, by six months' imprisonment." "I have known more of God," said Ralph Erskine, as he lay waiting for death, "since I came to this bed than through all my life." "O God," wrote Archbishop Tait in the day of his utter desolation, when the garden of his life had been turned into a desert, "Thou hast dealt very mysteriously with us. We have been passing through deep waters: our feet were well-nigh gone. But though thou slay us, yet will we trust in thee." Writing from his father's death-bed to a friend, Henry Drummond said, "Trouble is not such a new thing to you, but it is to me, and I hear it saying many things. Some I never knew before; others one has heard but never believed; others one has heard often and as often forgotten." Was not Bunyan right? "Though Christian had the hard hap to meet in the valley with Apollyon, yet I must tell you that in former times men have met with angels here: have found pearls here, and have in this place found the words of life." "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord," and many a man can say that he has never been so sure of

God, as just in the blank hours of loss, when his heart was stunned within him and all his life seemed to lie in ruins at his feet.

Nor is this all. Have we not all seen those to whom there have come through their suffering, not only a clearer vision of God, but larger sympathies, nay, indeed, a new revelation of life and of duty? What power, in them that are exercised thereby, has sorrow to subdue, to soften, to purify, purging the soul as by a refiner's fire of its earthliness and dross!

"Patience and abnegation of self and devotion to others,
This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her."

Who has not watched in some sick-room, where that hard lesson has been well learned, where the daylight seemed to linger longer than elsewhere, and the holy calm of the patient sufferer fell like a benediction on all hearts? "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." We could not say it once, perhaps we cannot say it even now, but with some of us things are happening every day that make the hard saying less hard, and long ere Time, the great annotator, has made his last entry we shall know that the Psalmist was right.

One of my pleasantest memories of our English Lakeland is of a drive home through Grasmere Vale in the dusk of the twilight, one summer evening in June, and the sight of thousands of the beautiful white marguerites gleaming like

stars in the dark meadows. Years ago (I was told) none of these lovely flowers were to be seen in the vale; but the farmers took to using lime for the fertilizing of the soil, then they sprang up in white abundance everywhere. I do not know if my information be correct, but this I do know, that trouble is sometimes the one thing needed to mingle with the soil of a man's life, that it may put forth its perfect flower.

> "We lay in dust, life's glory dead,
> And from the ground there blossoms red
> Life that shall endless be."

What are our sorrows doing for us? Adversity, as Thackeray has told us, is a great schoolmistress, and we have all, some time or other, to stand before her awful chair and feel our knuckles smarting under her blows. But, her lessons, her lessons—are we learning them? To some of God's children it has even seemed as if sufferings put upon them new responsibilities, and they have prayed that "in that day" they might not be laid against them, they have trembled lest their sorrows should be "lost sorrows." It is a fear, it is a prayer, that may well be on all our lips and in all our hearts.

We may not pray to be saved from all pain; for is it not written even of Christ that He was made perfect through suffering? And shall not the servant be even as His Lord? But this let us pray, that we may not suffer, and yet be the

same—careless, selfish, impenitent. To be thrust into the furnace, heated, perhaps, seven times hotter than it is wont to be, and to come out of it with all the dross and impurity still clinging to us—against that let a man pray with all the passion of his being. For, verily, an unblest sorrow is the saddest thing in life.

"And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the* LORD. And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city. . . . So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the* LORD. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive-trees hath the palmerworm devoured: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the* LORD. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up even into your nostrils: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the* LORD. I have overthrown some among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the* LORD."

This fourth chapter of Amos is to me one of the most terrible in the whole Bible, for it is the picture of a nation thrust into the fire and laid upon the anvil,

"Heated hot with burning fears
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom,"

and yet, in the end, the same shapeless, intractable mass that ever it was.

What are our sorrows saying to us? In them all God speaks to us; have we heard Him? We have had trouble upon trouble, wave upon wave, until all His billows have gone over us—"*Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*" Is it so? Then let us remember that "sorrow is God's last message to man; it is God speaking in emphasis." He who can be deaf to that voice can be deaf when God speaks loudest.

IS THERE ANYTHING IN GOD TO FEAR?

"*Behind the outworks of his nature, in the very citadel of his soul, there dwelt what can only be called the fear of God. He seemed to live in the constant recollection of something which is awful, even dreadful to remember—something which bears with searching force on all men's ways, and hopes and plans—something before which he knew himself to be, as it were, continually arraigned—something which it was strange and pathetic to find so little recognised among other men.*"—WRITTEN OF THE LATE DEAN CHURCH BY DEAN PAGET.

XV

IS THERE ANYTHING IN GOD TO FEAR?

"BERRY," said Dr. Dale one day to his Wolverhampton friend, "nobody is afraid of God now." "The wrath of God," says St. Paul, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"; but while we welcome the revelation of love, the revelation of wrath we ignore. "Behold," cries the same Apostle, "the goodness and the severity of God." These are the double rays which make the white light of Deity; and if the old theological spectrum erred sometimes in that it revealed only the fiery red ray, ours is not less at fault that shows it scarce visible at all. "A man that hath set at nought Moses' law," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an

unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." But how few of us have ever really felt that! "If," asks St. Peter, with a catch in his breath, "if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" But that sense of fear of the judgment of God has to-day well-nigh gone from us. Of course, we believe that sin matters, but it is to ourselves rather than to God, so that even when we think seriously of sin it is still of sin apart from God, as hurtful to ourselves rather than as hateful to Him. Confession has lost the agony of the Psalmist's cry, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight." The Divine authority is an unarmed authority; "nobody is afraid of God now."

And why, some one may ask, should we be afraid of God? Does He not love us—love us as no mother loves her child—love us all—even the worst and most unlovable? True; but now, tell me, where did you learn that? Was it not from Christ and the New Testament? But if He who taught us this, taught us also that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that a day is coming when He will render to every man according to his works, to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life; but unto them that obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness, wrath, and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul

of man that worketh evil—if, I say, He who taught us to call God "Love" taught us also these things, ought we not to receive His whole word—this as well as that? If the two truths stood together in His mind and in the minds of His Apostles, not excluding but completing each other, ought we not likewise to find a place for both in our minds?

This is the point to which I want all my words in this brief chapter to lead up. The God of Jesus Christ, the God who is revealed to us in every page of the New Testament, is a very different Being from the indulgent Eli, the infinite good nature, that men have so often pictured to themselves. To Christ and to all His Apostles the wrath of God is as real, as certain as the love of God. Within the covers of the one Book it is written "God is love," and "Our God is a consuming fire"; and one of its writers, with deep spiritual insight, links the two truths in one great word: "If ye call on Him as Father . . . pass the time of your sojourning in fear." The fear of the Father, the wrath of the Lamb—perchance it is only in Divine paradoxes like these that the whole truth can be told. I know how one half of the truth has been torn from the other, with what grossness and crude imagery and unscriptural exaggeration it has been set forth, until men have stopped their ears and turned away with a shudder, saying that if this were God they would curse Him and die. Yet with all such perversions we have nothing to do;

the New Testament is not responsible for them, and we had better make haste to forget them. The only question that really concerns us is this: Is there in the New Testament a revelation of wrath against sin, and if there is, are we giving to it in our minds and lives the place it holds there?

"Then are men to be frightened into religion? Are they to serve God, not through love but through fear—the coward's fear for his own skin?" Let us be under no delusion; no man ever was frightened into religion; God has no true servants who only serve Him through fear. But God's will is that our life should be fashioned by the whole truth which He has given to us, and if this of which I am speaking now is part of His truth, ought we not to give heed to it? If Christ thought well to appeal alike to men's hopes and their fears, can we afford to ignore His words?

And for the moment it shall be to the words of Christ alone that we will turn. "Back to Christ" is one of the favourite theological watch-words of the hour, and if only it be not used to depreciate the rightful authority of St. Paul and his brother Apostles, it may prove a very useful cry. The surprising thing is that students of the New Testament should sometimes speak as if Paul had somehow or other to be pushed on one side in order to make the way to Christ clear: for unless I have wholly misunderstood his Epistles, there is no one who is both so anxious and so able to take us back to Christ as just the

great Apostle of the Gentiles himself. However, I do not wish to stir up needless antagonisms, and therefore our appeal just now shall be limited to the teaching of Jesus as it is recorded by the Four Evangelists. We will ask Him to tell us if there is anything in God to fear. I take it for granted that for us His authority is final, that when we know His word, it is to us the end of all controversy. Indeed, to reject His authority is to put out our only light, and to make all our words on the matter as idle as the chattering of sparrows.

What then does Christ say? I begin where so many to-day are ready both to begin and to end—with the Sermon on the Mount. Its closing words are words of doom: "Every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof." "He that hath seen Me," Christ said to Philip, "hath seen the Father." In what He was and said and did, in His life and in His death, we read what God is. We follow Him from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Gennesaret, from Gennesaret to Jerusalem, to the upper room and its sweet solemnities, to Gethsemane and to Calvary, and at every step of the way He is saying to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." We are with Him at Cana and at Nain, with the little children whom He blessed, and her

whose many sins He forgave in the house of Simon, with Him again in the last awful darkness of the Cross; and everywhere and always He is still saying to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; if ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also." But it is of that same Jesus that it is written, "He looked round upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart." Is there no revelation of God here also? He who spoke the parable of the Prodigal Son told us likewise of the unforgiving servant, with whom his lord was wroth, and who was delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. "So," says Christ, "shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Is the one parable to be taken and the other left? "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," our mothers taught us to pray, and they are the right words for childhood to learn. But do they tell the whole truth concerning Christ? Ask that old Pharisee who heard Christ's sevenfold "woe," who saw His blazing eyes and quivering lips, who felt his own hypocrite's life shrivel to its very root beneath the swift lightning-strokes of those terrible words—ask him, "Rabbi, what thinkest thou of Christ?" Will he answer, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild"? Nay, verily. And even in that upper room, where the Pharisees are shut out, and the Master is alone with His disciples, and His words grow tender and caressing, as a mother's

to her child, even there the solemn note of warning is heard: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire" —who gather them? who cast them into the fire? There is, as some one has said, an added impressiveness in the unexplained awfulness in which all is left—"and they are burned."

Nothing in God to fear? It is impossible that a man should believe in Christ as the Revealer of God, and yet believe that. It was He who bade His disciples, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." It was He who declared concerning one of the Twelve that it were better for him that he had never been born. It was He who told us of the shut door and the outer darkness, of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, of the sin which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come, and of that day when He who wept over Jerusalem and prayed for His murderers and died for the world will say unto them on the left hand, "Depart from Me ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." "Jesus, Thy deeds were gentle, but who hath spoken words so austere as Thine? Thou hast told us of utter separation, Thou hast shown us a place where the tear falls in vain."

Surely it is a fact that should cause us to think that the most heart-shaking words to be found in the New Testament concerning sin and its consequences were spoken by our Lord Himself. If there is nothing in God to fear, what is the meaning of language like this I have just quoted? If God is only an Infinite Pity, "a summer ocean of kindliness never agitated by storms," how come words like these on the lips of Christ? We may call the language "figurative"; yes, but figurative of what? If Christ were in earnest, if He knew what He said and meant what He said, if He has not deliberately trifled with us on a matter the most solemn conceivable, there are tremendous facts behind those tremendous words. As Dean Church truly says, "We may put aside the New Testament altogether; but if we profess to be guided by it, is there anything but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation for obstinate, impenitent, unforgiven sin, sin without excuse and without change?"

I do not forget that good and wise men, equally loyal to Christ and submissive to His authority, have interpreted His words in different ways. Some have found in them the doctrine of a literal eternity of future punishment; some have held they taught what is known as "Conditional Immortality"; while others, again, have thought that, with all their immitigable sternness, they still left an open door of hope in the life to

come. Into these various interpretations I cannot enter; but let us take heed that disputable theories do not hide from us this indisputable and undisputed fact that, as Dr. Dale says, "the words of Christ, however indefinite they may be with regard to the kind of penalty which is to come upon those who live and die in open revolt against God, and however indefinite they may be with regard to the duration of the penalty, are words which shake the heart with fear." There *is* something in God to fear. It is not the same to Him whether we are good or whether we are bad. His wrath is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. It may come with leaden feet, but it strikes with iron hands. God does not pay at the end of every week, but at last He pays.

I have heard of a Swiss peasant who had built his cottage on one of the lower slopes of a mighty mountain that reared its great white shoulders high above him. One springtime, through the sudden breaking up of the long winter, the site of the cottage grew perilous, and his neighbours warned him of the avalanche. But he only smiled at their fears; he had watched the seasons come and go these many years; no evil had befallen him, the avalanche would not come, in his day at least. "It is coming, it is coming," they said, with their finger pointed upward; but he only shook his head and went his way. But one day, on the heights above, there

was a slip, a rush, and a roar; and there to-day the peasant lies with ten thousand tons of *débris* for his tomb! Be not deceived; God is not mocked, and if we, in the hardness and impenitence of our hearts, are treasuring up for ourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, in that day, as surely as there is a God that judgeth in the earth, it will fall upon us and we shall be undone for ever.

What, then, shall we do, and whither shall we turn? "As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me.'" That is one thing we may do; we may shut our eyes to our peril, and even snap our fingers at the avalanche, and dally, like light-hearted fools, on the volcano's slopes, though the seismometer warn us of our impending doom. That is to choose the way of death. And the way of life? Paul points us to it when he writes of "Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." And if now we turn to Him and hide in Him, then "in that day," when He cometh to judge the world, His face—the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne—shall smite us not with terror, but with gladness; for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

> "Secure I am, if Thou art mine,
> And lo! from sin, and grief, and shame
> I hide me, Jesus, in Thy name."

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

"*The faintest longing to love,* is *love; the very dread to miss for ever the face of God, is love; the very terror at that dreadful state where none can love, is love. Feelest thou thyself dry, seared, impenitent, bewildered, stupefied, without feeling?—yea, if there be any who can himself scarcely tell what he believes, or whether he believes at all, let him feel himself abandoned to Satan, unable to distinguish whether blasphemous and impure thoughts be of his own mind or the darts of the Evil One driven through him; let him be this and all beside which can be imagined miserable, so that covered with the ulcers of his sins he seem to himself to be all one wound, unbound, unclosed, unsoftened, a very living death; yet if he have any longing to be delivered from the body of his death, he has not committed the unpardonable sin. These around him may say, 'Lord, he stinketh'; the heavy stone of earthly sins may lie upon him, and he lie motionless, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, so that he cannot approach unto Jesus, and his eyes wrapped round so that he should not see Him;* yet He whom he cannot seek may seek him; *that voice which awakeneth the dead can reach him yet, and he may hear the voice of the Son of God, and, hearing, live.*"—DR. PUSEY.

XVI

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

"*Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.*"—MATT. xii. 31, 32.

"*Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.*"—MARK iii. 28, 29, 30.

THERE are perhaps no words in the whole Bible which have been the cause of so much misunderstanding and pain as these. Some of you will remember how this saying of our Lord tormented John Bunyan during those terrible spiritual experiences of which he has left us so graphic a record in his *Grace Abounding*. When, he tells us, "with sad and careful heart," he began to search in the Word of God, if he could in any place espy a word of promise or any encouraging sentence by which he might take relief, he lighted

on this third chapter of Mark's Gospel, from which I have just quoted. "And now," he says, "I was both a burden and a terror to myself; nor did I ever so know as now what it was to be weary of my life and yet afraid to die. Oh, how gladly now would I have been anybody but myself! anything but a man! and in any condition but mine own! For there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression and to be saved from wrath to come." "These things," he goes on to say, "would so break and confound my spirit that I could not tell what to do; I thought at times they would have broke my wits. Oh, none knows the terrors of those days but myself." And therein is John Bunyan but the type of multitudes. "How immense," says John Wesley—and perhaps no man ever had such an opportunity of judging in a matter of this sort as the great evangelist of the last century—"is the number in every nation throughout the Christian world of those who have been more or less distressed on account of this scripture! What multitudes in this kingdom have been perplexed above measure upon this very account!" And if any one thinks that this is the language of exaggeration, let him put himself through a course of reading in religious biography, and let him mark the number of those whom these words of Jesus have put upon the rack, or who have been appealed to for help by those who have been so

troubled. I will be bold to say that it would be difficult to find a minister of any Christian Church who has had so much as twelve months' experience in dealing with men and women who has not had, as I myself have again and again, to try to comfort as best he could some stricken soul whom these words of Jesus have filled with unspeakable anguish. Indeed, there have been cases not a few in which long brooding over these words and the torturing dread that they had committed what they called "the unpardonable sin" have driven men and women to the verge of insanity itself. A distinguished minister of the Congregational Church has left it on record that the first grave task set him in his first charge as a Christian pastor was to carry what comfort he could to the widow of his predecessor, who, in the sudden gloom into which she had been plunged by her husband's death, had become possessed of the idea that she, devout and devoted woman as she was, had somehow committed this fatal sin, this sin which hath never forgiveness. And notwithstanding all that he and others with him could do, it was impossible to unfix the grasp of this horrible idea upon her mind. With an almost incredible ingenuity she turned all grounds for hope into food for her despair; and in a few weeks she passed from their care into an asylum, only to be carried from the asylum to her grave. It is a terrible thing to think of, and a terrible thing to have to say, but it is a fact beyond all dispute

that there are men and women not criminal, nor vicious, nor in aught sinners above all the rest, but tender, sensitive souls who to-night are dying in a madhouse because Jesus once said, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness." For our own sake, then, for the sake of others whom perhaps we may some day be able to help, and, may I say it, for Christ's sake, that the shadow which our misunderstandings have cast upon His name may be lifted, ought we not to seek a clear and exact understanding of what it was that He meant when He spake these words? Let me try to show you in the first place what Jesus did mean, and in the second place what Jesus did not mean.

I

"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him." What a word that is! Mark the tremendous assumption which one writer has pointed out for us: *the critic is always wrong.* "Speak against Me," Christ says, "and you shall be—*forgiven.*" Never *man* spake like this man. Who of earth's best and greatest ever dared to say to his fellows, Criticise me, judge me, speak against me, and I will forgive you? Verily, it is a greater than Solomon, or any of the sons of men that is here. The man who speaks against Christ has need of forgiveness; and that forgiveness, Christ says, he shall have.

Men speak against Christ ignorantly and in unbelief, not knowing Him as He is, seeing Him only through the thick haze of false tradition, or the blurring, blinding mists of His followers' infidelity, and when men so speak against Christ their words, He says, shall be forgiven them.

"But," He goes on to say—and these are the difficult words,—"whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." Now these words mean something. They do not mean, as I will try to show in a moment, what they have often been supposed to mean; but they mean something; they are no idle, empty threat. Christ never spoke simply to frighten men. One excellent expositor, whose praise is in all the Churches for his lucid and helpful writings, but who, unfortunately, the moment he turns to consider the sterner aspects of Christ's teaching, seems to give his judgment to the four winds of heaven, says of this particular passage that in it "our Lord simply states a moral truism, as we might have inferred from the casual and unemphatic manner of His speech." This is simply trifling with us, and worse than trifling. Whatever may be the precise significance to be attached to this saying of our Lord, men have always felt, and have rightly felt, that no more tremendous words ever fell from his lips. So far from being merely "casual and unemphatic," they were evidently spoken with the most solemn emphasis.

They are reported in reduplicated form by three of the four Evangelists, and in Mark's version they are prefaced by that emphatic "Verily I say unto you," which Christ never used except as a kind of index-finger to show that something of special and peculiar moment was about to follow. No; to empty the words of their significance is not to explain them. Respect alike for our intelligence and for Christ as a Divine Teacher demands some worthier method of interpretation.

If I am not mistaken, the key to this difficult lock is already in the lock itself. What I mean is this: When Mark has reported our Lord's saying he himself adds by way of explanation, "Because they said He hath an unclean spirit." "*Because* they said"—obviously, then, this is not an isolated saying, it is linked to the incident which immediately precedes it, and if we are to interpret it aright we must read it in the light which that incident casts upon it. The incident, in brief, was this: Christ had wrought a miracle of healing on one possessed with a devil blind and dumb, "insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw." But when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." How did Christ answer them? First He called them unto Him, and quietly reasoned with them: "How," He asked, "can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom be divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against

itself that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan hath risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end." Thus out of their own mouth Christ convicts them of sheer irrationality; they have only to think for a moment, and reason herself will turn upon them and rend them. But the words of the Pharisees were not merely illogical, they were sinful, diabolical. They sprang not so much from a perverted mind as from a diseased heart. And therefore, as Christ goes on, His tones deepen, His words grow more solemn, and with His eye on the spiritual condition that alone had made their language possible, He said, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness." Mark, He does not say they have already committed this sin, but His words at least imply that they were tending towards it, and that even as He spake to them they stood in grave and imminent peril.

The Pharisees were not condemned because of any word which in ignorance they spake against the Son of Man. Their sin was this, that face to face with a work of mercy and of love, with that which they knew to be good, they nevertheless dared to declare it to be a thing of the devil: "This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." They were throwing in their lot with them that put bitter for sweet and darkness for light, that say to evil, "Evil, come, be thou my good." "They have

both seen and hated both Me and My Father": so Christ declared at a later hour of His ministry; and this was the sin of the Pharisees. A man may even hate God and his sin shall be forgiven him, for his hate may be but the fruit of his ignorance, and pass with it. That which men do blindfolded, not knowing the thing they do, God's mercy is always large enough to cover. But when men sin with both eyes wide open, when, knowing full well the thing they do they take evil to be their portion, when "they have both seen *and* hated" the true and the good—then what can God do? "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

And now, I think, we shall begin to understand why Christ said of this sin that "it hath never forgiveness." It was no single act of sin of which He spoke, but rather a condition of soul, a spiritual attitude; and for this He says there is no forgiveness, not because of any unwillingness on God's part to forgive, but because he who has chosen to make it his own has made repentance, and therefore forgiveness, to be impossible. Such an one does not ask the Divine forgiveness, he does not want it, he will not have it, though it be thrust upon him. He flings God's gifts back in His face; he sees the miracle of the Divine pity and laughs it to scorn.

Thinking over this dark saying of our Lord we naturally call to mind the "sin unto death"

of which the Apostle John speaks—"not concerning this do I say that a man should make request" unto God—and the words, not less mysterious, in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares of some that "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." The best exposition of these three difficult words of Scripture must still leave many questions unanswered, but one thing at least seems clear, that that to which they all point is, I repeat, no single act of sin, blacker than words can paint it though it may be, but rather that fixed and permanent and final condition of soul into which it is awfully possible for a man at last to bring himself, who "hath trodden under foot the Son of God," and consciously, wilfully, and persistently "hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

Further than this we may not go. Who they are who to-day are thus putting themselves for ever beyond the power of even God's forgiveness is not for us to judge. As I have already pointed out, Christ does not say that even the Pharisees, near as they had come to the brink of the precipice, had actually gone over it. But He warned them, and He warns us, that a man may so take evil to be his portion, may so hug it to himself, that at last—at last—repentance is impossible; the Divine forgiveness is never asked and never wanted.

This, I think, is what Christ meant. Now let us turn for a moment to consider—

II

What Christ did not mean. And for once, I confess, I am more anxious about the negative than the positive aspect of the truth. It may well be that for some my attempted exposition of the text has done nothing save make them more conscious than ever of its difficulty. But, however that may be, I want to make it clear as the noonday that neither here nor anywhere in God's Word is it said that there are sins of which a man may repent, earnestly and with tears, and yet which God will refuse to forgive. Christ did not mean that. Let me say it in the plainest and most unequivocal language I can command. Christ did not mean that any deed of evil, any sudden transgression, foul and red with brother's blood though it may be, can place a man for ever beyond the pale of the mercy of God. Christ did not mean that a day will ever come when true repentance will be unavailing, when the love and forgiveness of God will not leap forth in response to the penitence of man. Christ did not mean that. How could he have meant it? It would have been for Him Himself to have given the lie to His whole life. It would have been for Him who hung upon the Cross Himself to have made that Cross of none effect.

To make this plain is really all that just now I am concerned about. And if I have helped no one to lay hold of the right interpretation of the

text, at least let me help some one that with both hands he may thrust from him the wrong interpretation of it. Believe, if need be in spite of what is written here, that God will always have mercy upon all who turn unto Him with true purpose of heart. From the doubtful meaning of this one difficult text I appeal to the character of God as He has revealed Himself to us. I appeal to all that stands written in His Word. I appeal to the teaching, the life and the death of Him whose hard saying this is. And if from this day forward the devil torment any man or woman of us with this solitary verse out of God's Book, let us answer and silence him with this mighty threefold witness.

I appeal to the character of God. We men, the poorest and unworthiest of us—do we think of it as we ought?—are made in the Divine likeness and image; tiny fragments of Deity are we, able even in our fragmentariness to flash back some gleam of the likeness Divine. From that which we are we may learn something of what He is. "God's possible is taught by His world's loving." And if in us, broken and bruised by pride and envy and hate as we are, love and pity and forgiveness can yet wake to answer to the cry of want and woe and sin; if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, who shall measure the "how much more" of our Father's pitying love? Is not His high higher than our highest? Is not His good better than our best? How, then, shall we dare think Him

less good even than we are? Why will we slander Him as though He were less willing to receive us than we are to seek Him? I have read of an Arab chief, whose laws forbade the rearing of his female offspring, that the only tears he ever shed were when his daughter brushed the dust from his beard as he buried her in a living grave. But where are the tears of God as He thrusts back into the outer darkness of their sin them that stretch to Him lame hands of faith and pray to be forgiven? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever?" Nay, verily; I will answer Him out of His own mouth: He is a God ready to pardon. He delighteth in mercy.

I appeal to all that is written in God's Word. Turn to its first page, and what is it that we read? "And the Lord God called unto the man and said unto him, Where art thou?" So does the Good Shepherd seek that which is gone astray. Turn to its last page, and again what is it that we read? "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And the last page of the Book bends round to meet the first, and the clasp that makes of Old and New one Book is the golden clasp of love. Open it where you will—in the law or the psalms, in the history or the prophets—and everywhere one hears, as it were, the pleading wail of the heart of God: Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye

die, O house of Israel?" And is it even thinkable that *Jesus* should have said that there is some sin so heinous that though a man repent of it, and turn and seek to be forgiven, God will yet answer him with an eternal nay.

Above all, I appeal to Jesus Himself. "Lord," asked one of His disciples, "how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?" Mark well our Lord's answer: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times"—a number you can count upon your fingers—"until seventy times seven," an infinite, uncountable number; what has love to do with arithmetic? But if thus He bids me forgive, is it not thus that he forgives Himself? Can it be that to me, man, the sinner, He says, "until seventy times seven," while He, God, the Saviour, is content with a poor "seven times"? Nay, verily; 'tis the yoke he carries Himself that He bids me carry; 'tis the law of His own being He would make the law of mine; and "until seventy times seven" will He forgive them that turn unto Him.

"And when He beheld the city"—what city? Jerusalem, the city where men were to slay Him, where they would put up the rough cross of wood and pin Him to it. He knew all about it; but "when He beheld the city He wept over it." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem"—like the smothered cry of a mother's breaking heart—"how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would

not!" And when He came back triumphant from the tomb, and His disciples were gathered about Him for the last time, what is it that He tells them? "Go ye, preach to every creature under heaven repentance and remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem." "*Beginning at Jerusalem*"—it was as though He had said, Go, seek out Annas and Caiaphas and all the men that hunted Me down to death and say unto them, "Through this Man whom ye with wicked hands did take and crucify is preached unto you the gospel of forgiveness"; find out the Roman soldier that thrust his spear into My side, and tell him there is a nearer way to My heart than that; say to him and to all men that whosoever will may come, since Christ has died. Unpardonable sin! Why, brethren, the coming of Christ, the Cross of Christ, all He was and did and bore for men are all emptied of their sacred meaning if it be not true that "there is no unpardonable sin, except the sin of refusing the pardon which avails for all sin."

Therefore, if a man fear that he have committed this sin against the Holy Ghost, this sin which hath never forgiveness, let him know full well that he has not so much as come near to it; and of that I want no stronger proof than just this his fear. Whatever else may be said of that terrible condition of soul to which Christ here refers, there must always go along with it an utter spiritual numbness and unconcern. So that, again I say, if a man ask himself with fears and tears and trembling if he

have sinned this sin against God, his own fears are the best answer ; if he had, he would know no fear.

Hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter ; *he that will, may.* The hard and impenitent heart that hardens itself in its impenitence may baffle even the Divine love ; but a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt never despise. There is a beautiful story told in connection with the work of the late Professor Henry Drummond among the students attending the Edinburgh University. He was conducting, several years ago, the usual Sunday evening service, but that night when he came to deliver the address, instead of reading anything from the Scriptures by way of text, he drew from his pocket an anonymous letter which he had received during the preceding week. The letter was written by a medical student, by a man who had fallen from one sin to another, until he had sounded the lowest deeps of beastliness and unnameable lust, and its closing words were weighted as with the despair of a lost soul. The Professor read two or three sentences from it, and then he said, with a quivering voice, that if only the man who had written it had put his name and address to it he would have been over by the next train from Glasgow to see him. "But it may be," he said, "though he would not do that, he is here tonight in the Hall, and I am going to speak to him." And then, picking out that one imaginary man in the thousand, he preached to him in his own simple, wonderful, winning way the Gospel of the

love of Christ. He told him how that when Christ was here on earth He lived amongst sinners, He looked out for the man that was "down," how a man's very badness was just his claim on One who came, not to call the righteous, but sinners. Then the speaker went on to say how, as he had entered our city that day, he saw a beautiful white cloud resting over it. Whence had the cloud come? The sunbeams had gone down into the city, down into its alleys and slums, and from noisome pools and puddles had drawn up the moisture and purified it, and now it lay there a fleecy cloud, white and pure, in God's own heavens. And so Christ comes into our life and out from its foulness, and vileness, and filth He lifts men, making them clean, till they are meet at last to stand even in the pure presence of our God.

I want to ring that same great bell of hope again this day. He that will may. No man goes backward to perdition; there is no hell for the man whose face is towards heaven. Sin may be in front of me, baffling me, beating me, driving me back, but if my face be towards God and goodness, while He sits upon His throne, He will never suffer me at last to fall from Him. "If any man will" —wilt thou? And if this day thou wilt, then, whatever thy past may be, behold all things shall become new.

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